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PRIVATE EYE

NUTTER GATECRASHES PRINCE WILLIAM'S PARTY

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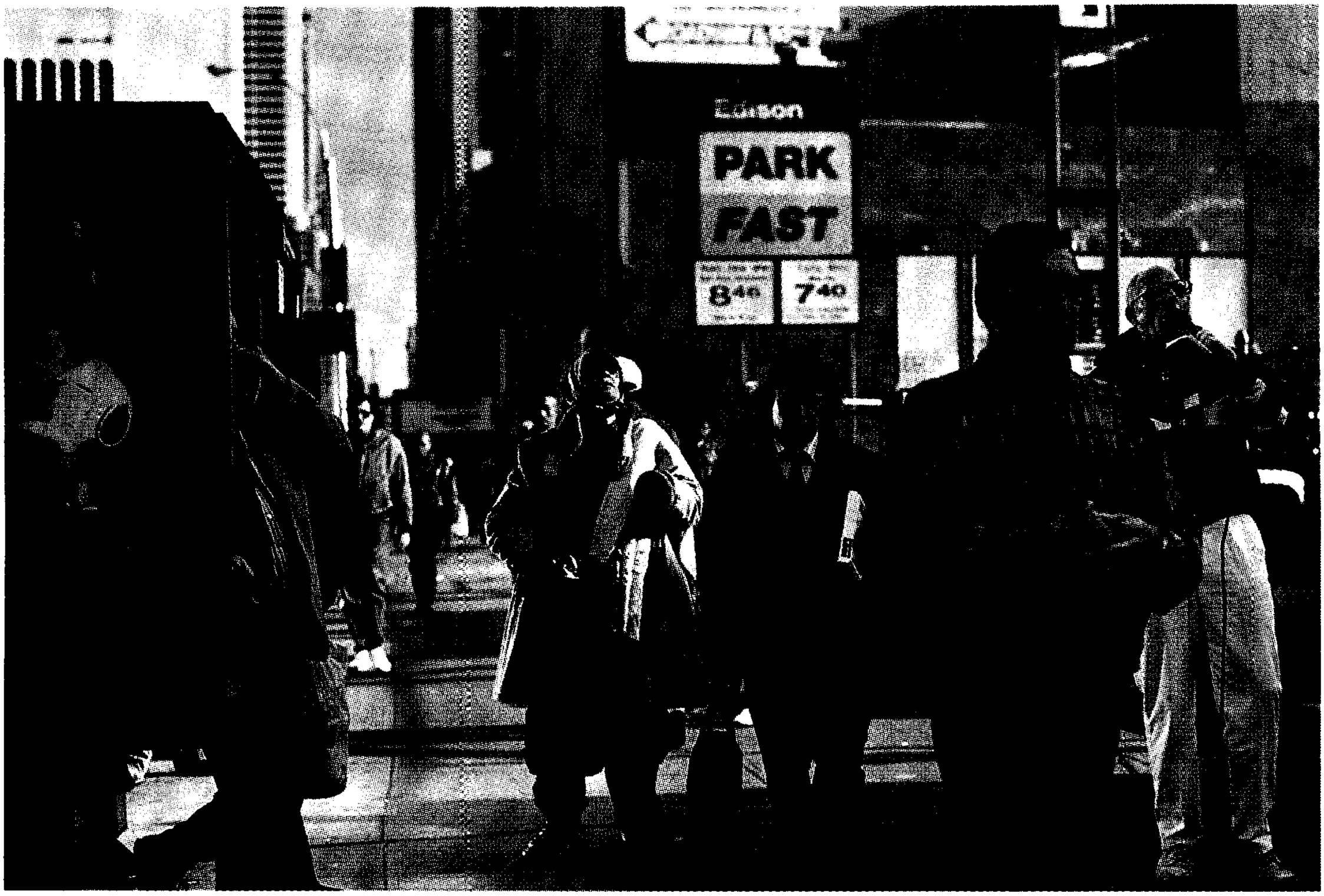

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PRIVATE EYE

24 PAGE NEWS

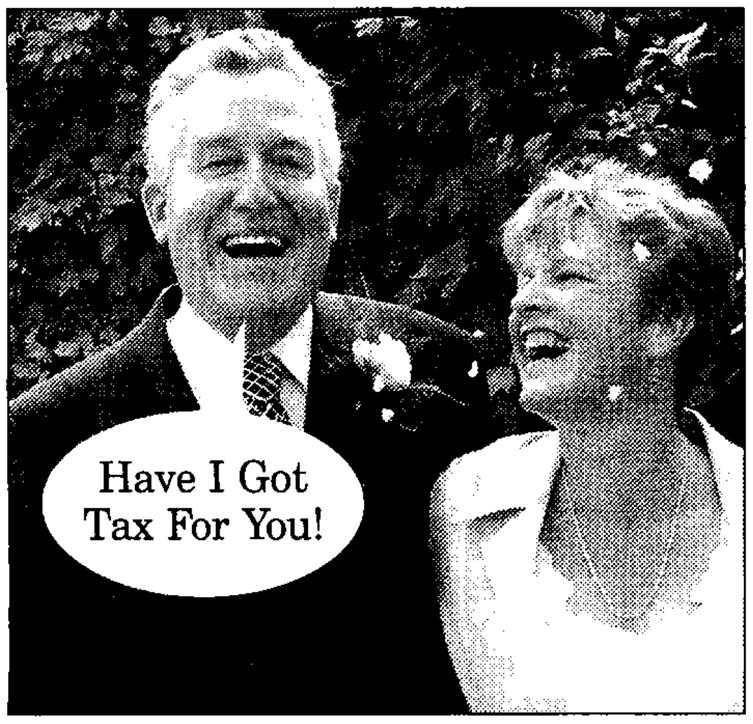
PETER Hain's "radical" proposal to raise the top rate of tax to penalise high earners rather than the middle-classes would see a significant drop in his own household income.

His recent promotion to leader of the Commons means that Hain's salary totals nearly *£128,000* (he's expected to do the part-time job of Welsh secretary for free). But his new wife, Cardiff-based headhunter Elizabeth Haywood, also brings in around £90,000 a year.

Those figures have caused some raised eyebrows among the rather less well-off residents in Hain's Neath constituency, where the couple married on 14 June. But they are even less impressed by the new Mrs Hain's employment record: while the one-time firebrand of the left insists his romance with Ms Haywood began while she was working as PR woman for the Association of Train Operators during the time of the Hatfield crash, they first met when she headed the Welsh CBI during the mid-1990s.

In that role she worked hard to oppose the minimum wage and ensure that labour costs in the valleys were kept at a "very reasonable" 20 percent below the national average.

TOP COMEDIAN WEDS



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ABC

"A SENIOR Tory strategist revealed yesterday that he leads a double life as Britain's leading organiser of upmarket sex parties," says a front-page splash in the *Sunday Times*. "By day Dougie Smith, 41, is the respectable coordinator of Conservatives for Change..."

Respectable! Has this adjective ever before been applied to Douglas "Dougie" Smith? He first came to attention (clad in paramilitary fatigues) as a leading stormtrooper of the loony-right faction that dominated the Federation of Conservative Students in the 1980s. In 1985 he won election as vice-chairman of the FCS by claiming to be a student from Napier College – but was later sacked when it transpired that he was nothing of the sort.

The *Sunday Times* is astonished to learn that Dougie now spends his evenings organising "swingers' parties", aka orgies, in Mayfair town houses and country mansions. But he has always been a libidinous chap, which may explain why in the 1990s he was taken up by David Hart and Sir Jimmy Goldsmith, both famous right-wing lotharios who clearly recognised a kindred spirit.

Eye readers may also recall that in April 1990 Smith was arrested by Hammersmith police after allegedly threatening to kill a fellow FCS member, Toby Baxendale. The cause of the dispute was a young woman from the LSE who had transferred her affections from Dougie to Toby.

It seems his attitude to "partner-swapping" has changed a bit since then. As has his political stance: the man who was once to the right of Norman Tebbit is now a liberal Portillista, campaigning to make the Conservative Party more, er, touchy-feely. Maybe he could organise IDS's next bonding weekend...

WHAT tipped off staff at the *Christian Science Monitor* that it might be a good idea to check the authenticity of its George Galloway documents, which alleged the MP had received $10m from Saddam Hussein's regime?

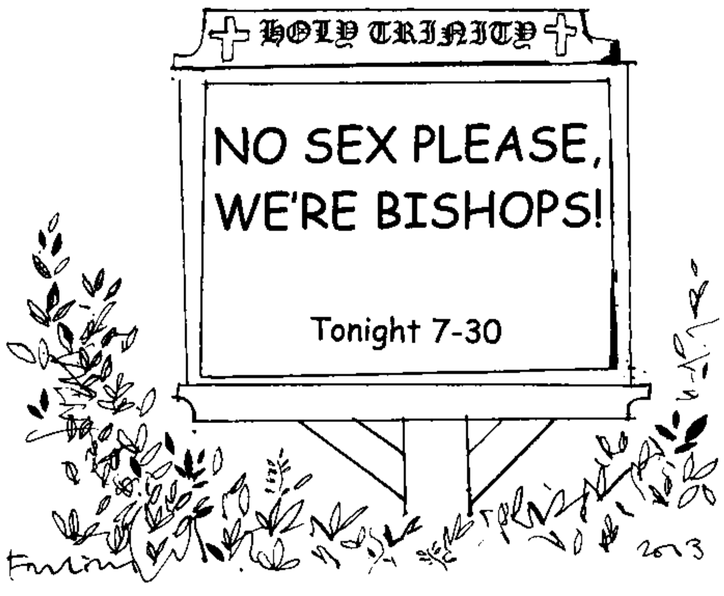
Not a writ; for despite his persistent promises since stories appeared in the *CSM* and *Telegraph* two months ago, Galloway has not served legal papers on either publication.

Suspicions were raised after Philip Smucker, the reporter who had acquired the documents from Iraqi general Salah Abdel Rasool, admitted that he had handed over $800 for them and given Rasool 24 hours to come up with the goods. A more sceptical Baghdad-based colleague, Irene Prusher, was sent round to visit the general, and was promptly offered a number of other scoops, including conclusive proof that the 11 September hijackers learned to fly in Iraq.

As Prusher reported back to her editors in Boston, it was all just too good to be true.

GEOFF MONKS, the Northamptonshire publican who found himself locked up in Woodhill prison, one of Britain's most notorious high-security jails, for allegedly having a piece of mouldy ham in his fridge (*Eyes passim*), was told on three separate occasions by different warders that his fellow inmate, Soham murders suspect Ian Huntley, was going to kill himself.

Monks, jailed for four months because he was unable to pay record fines resulting from trumped up food safety charges brought by his local



"Cinderella, you SHALL go to the Ball!"

council, was released on 5 June after serving eight weeks. Four days later Huntley attempted to kill himself by taking a cocktail of anti-depressants and paracetamol which he had hidden in teabags. Last week a prison service inquiry into the suicide attempt found "serious systems failures" at the prison.

For the first week of his sentence Monks was in the health care wing, in a room above Huntley. According to Monks, prison staff were well aware that Huntley was in serious danger of attempting suicide – indeed, they spoke about the prospect in a jocular manner. One uniformed officer told Monks: "Huntley will be dead in three weeks"; another said "he'll kill himself soon"; and a senior officer remarked: "Huntley? He won't be with us long. Word is he's going to kill himself."

Monks, who is on medication for a heart condition, said any tablets he received were delivered singly in a transparent plastic cup. When the pill was in the mouth the cup was filled with water and after it was swallowed a warder would check to see that it had not been hidden under the tongue. Monks is baffled at why he – a non-suicidal category D prisoner – received his drugs "by the book" while Huntley, category A and a known suicide risk, was somehow able to secrete separate pills on 29 occasions. "Of course he didn't do that," says Monks. "He must have had some other source of supply." But how? And why? Questions which the hurried prison service report has not answered.

Oh dear, it's tough at the top!

Even if you become prime minister you are circumcised: look at John Major.

Sunday Times

CONGRATULATIONS are due to HM Customs and Excise boss Richard Broadbent on his birthday honours list knighthood.

Sharing the joyful news with staff, Broadbent used the in-house customs intranet to say that the award "sends out an unambiguous signal about the high regard that Customs and Excise is now held in by Government and the extent to which it is seen as a role model for the rest of Civil Service."

An unambiguous signal too, perhaps, that Broadbent has walked away largely unbloodied from his role in the sale of hundreds of Inland Revenue and customs properties to Mapeley, a company based in the tax haven of Bermuda.

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NEWS

WHAT do the highly-paid lawyers at the Saville Bloody Sunday inquiry do in their spare time?

Some light was thrown on that question recently at a posh restaurant in London's Oxford Street where a group of exhausted lawyers had retired after another gruelling day at the inquiry at Methodist Central Hall.

Hardly had the lawyers sat down than a silly personal insult from abrasive but diminutive Derry solicitor Greg McCartney sent burly Belfast barrister Brian McCartney into a fury. Big Brian, clutching his cutlery, launched himself at the solicitor, threatening terrible violence.

Awful consequences might have followed had it not been for the prompt action of yet another solicitor, martial arts expert Des Doherty. Des pinned the wretched Greg to the floor with his foot, while somehow managing to restrain the angry barrister. As the situation cooled, another barrister, John Coyle, suggested gently that the solicitor might like to leave the restaurant. "Fuck off!" was the legalistic reply.

VLADIMIR Putin's state visit to Britain at the end of June is expected to see the signing of some hefty paperwork by the Russian president and Tony Blair, including a Russo-British "communiqué" on energy cooperation and a "memorandum" on a north European gas pipeline.

The planned cooperation will be good, but hardly unexpected, tidings for BP which has already announced plans to invest $6.75bn in a joint venture with Russian oil giant TNK in the next few months.

And what's good for BP is good for the literally hundreds of government members and Labour party apparatchiks with links to the oil company, reported by the *Eye* over the past few years.

To name a mere handful, BP chief executive Lord John Browne is a Labour peer; former BP chairman Lord Simon has served the Blair government as minister for European trade; and BP director of communications Anji Hunter used to be a trusted aide and "comfort blanket" at No 10.

To which can be added all the ministers who have accepted declarable gifts from BP; all the party workers who have slinked off to work at the oil firm (and vice versa); and all the BP folks accepting gongs over the past few years. The Russian deal should help keep the wheel of government well oiled indeed.

BIG business has recently come under fire for "rewarding failure", but the disease seems to have infected Britain's growing taxpayer-funded quangocracy too.

How else to explain the way Sir Graham Hall has been rewarded as chairman of Yorkshire Forward?

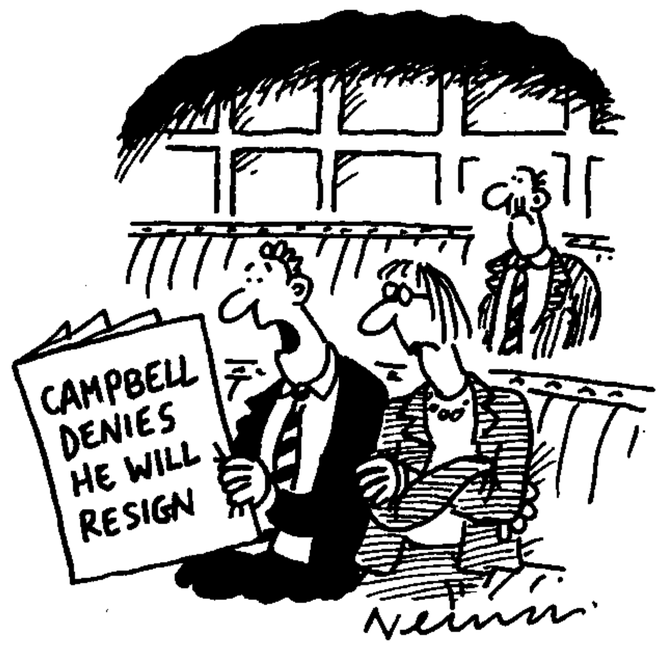
First Hall was knighted, even though his government-appointed regional development agency had fallen far short of its targets for job creation and business support (*Eye* 1077). Now he has been appointed by the treasury to the government's standing committee on euro preparations, whose job is to get Britain ready for the single currency.

Then again, perhaps Gordon Brown won't be too bothered if this particular quango also fails.

WELCOME back to former Met deputy assistant commissioner Roy Clark, who comes out of retirement to take up the £65,000-a-year job as first director of investigations for the new police complaints commission (PCC).

Eye readers might recall Mr Clark for his painstaking and thorough investigation of the police football team and drinking club known as the Walthamstow Overseas Geographical Society (WOGS). There was nothing wrong there, he discovered, but his anti-corruption CIB3 squad thought there *was* something wrong (there wasn't) when it investigated Sergent Gurpal Virdi for sending racist mail to himself (which he didn't).

The tough interview panel that examined Clark for the new job included two former Yard officers, Bill Taylor, the author of the report finding nothing wrong in the recent prosecution of the former royal butler, and Dave Wood, who was appointed by Clark to the anti-corruption squad in 1997.



"Then it must be true"

A QUESTION OF HONOURS

Get Knighted

THE Queen's birthday honours reflected Tony Blair's values perfectly: one trade unionist, Bill Morris, getting knighted in the company of five fat cats.

Joining Morris as a knight was **Francis McKay**, who earns £1,540,000 a year as boss of Compass Group. His firm does well out of private finance initiatives (PFIs) and privatisation in general, unlike the thousands of low paid cleaners and porters who work for Compass.

Employees of Compass subsidiary Medirest have been balloting for strikes and walking out in Glasgow and London hospitals in protest at the "two-tier" workforce. They forced Compass to pay contract staff the same rates as NHS workers and to offer sick pay to hospital porters. Meanwhile Medirest porters and telephonists at Kingston hospital where told to bring in their own cleaning materials to spruce the place up.

John Gains, boss of the builder Mowlem, was also knighted. (He was paid £387,921 last year and holds share options worth £258,000 at current prices.) Gains is also a big supporter of the PFI, which gives his firms projects like the James Cook "super-hospital" in Teesside, which has fewer beds than the non-PFI hospitals it replaces.

Under Gains Mowlem has had a striking impact on workplace safety. Mowlem was fined £100,000 by the health and safety executive in September 1997 after a worker died falling from a steel storage tank in Cheshire. It was fined £45,769 in September 1998 after a roofer fell to his death at a college in Cambridgeshire. The following February Mowlem was fined £31,908 after falling scaffolding boards injured passers-by in Manchester. Luckily, the last builder to fall on a Mowlem site, a carpenter hurt in Exeter last April, only broke his collarbone so the firm was fined just £2,628.

The knighthood for **Chris O'Donnell**, £890,000-a-year chief executive of medical supply firm Smith & Nephew, underlined the government's determination to crack down on fat cat pay. So did the knighthood for **Mike Hodgkinson**, the £735,000-a-year boss of the British Airports Authority, an award which emphasised Labour's love of the more-airports-everywhere-now lobby.

Another knighted boss, EMAP's outgoing chief executive **Robin Miller**, showed how strongly Labour feels about top pay. Miller wrote to the DTI condemning its move to get shareholders to vote on executive salaries as "patently ludicrous". The latest available figures show Miller was paid a modest £185,000, but this was bumped up by a £367,854 gain from "exercising share options".

Miller resisted NUJ recognition on his titles as hard as he could. He was finally forced to sign a deal with the unions on his healthcare titles last February. Measly pay offers to journalists led to strikes on the same titles. Miller's knighthood recognizes his great contribution to British culture — *FHM* magazine. Arise Sir Miller of Ladmag!

The plutocracy

Tony's values also showed lower down the honours' totem pole. Two trade union leaders got CBEs – **George Brumwell** of builders' union UCATT and **Peter Smith** of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers – but they were well outnumbered by plutocrats.

George Iacoebscu, the £1.15m-a-year chairman of the Canary Wharf group, got a CBE, as did **Alan Cherry**, the £903,000-a-year boss of Countryside Properties. They were joined by outgoing Trinity Mirror Boss Philip Graf. His last salary was £837,000, his company pension valued at £3,348,000. The citation was "for services to regional newspapers" rather than the Mirror itself. This will surprise NUJ members at the *Newcastle Chronicle*, who went on strike against Graf's measly pay for regional hacks.

Ian Ferguson, the new chief exec of Tate & Lyle, got a CBE. His salary is yet to be reported, but the previous incumbent earned around £400,000. **Robert Woods**, managing director of P&O got a CBE. The firm keeps its executive salaries under wraps, but currently faces charges of sacking UK crews in favour of cheap overseas workers.

Servile servants

It's traditional for senior civil servants to get awards, but three stand out in these honours.

Clive Norris from John Prescott's office became a Commander of the Order of Bath (CB) in recognition of his hawkish role in the fire-fighters' strike. It was Norris on the government side who really wanted to tear into the FBU, so much so that it is rumoured he had to be kept away from the final settlement lest he tear it up.

Roy Griffins at the department of transport also got a CB, presumably recognising his role in the botched privatisation of air traffic control. Not only was Griffins, as head of the aviation directorate, central to the air traffic PPP, he also went to parliament to defend the deal before unimpressed MPs on the transport select committee.

The CBE for **Terence Jagger** of the ministry of defence reflects his role in the dubious sell-off of "QinetiQ", the business stitched together from the army's research labs. Jagger was deeply involved in the sale of the Porton Down-based business to the Carlyle Group, an American firm linked to George Bush, John Major and the Bin Laden family. Jagger also went to parliament to try to explain the deal to sceptical MPs.

Arms dealers

As usual, making weapons was the most honourable activity. The splendidly named **Marcus De La Poer Beresford**, outgoing chief exec of engineering and arms firm GKN, got a CBE. His salary more than doubled to £1.22m in his last year at GKN.

David Marshall, head of the Society of British Aerospace Companies, which acts as top lobbyist and salesman for the UK's arms industry, got a CBE. Another went to **Ian Stopps**, UK chief exec of American arms giant Lockheed. Stopps was also Lockheed UK boss when the firm sold its disastrous Swanwick air traffic contol system to the government. Lesser awards went to lesser mortals, including an OBE to **Colin Hague**, Westland Helicopters' chief test pilot, and an MBE to Diane Thompson, personal assistant to the chairman of tank maker Alvis.

Street Of Shame

SUE MOTT, the *Daily Telegraph*'s answer to Sally Jockstrap, is never lovelier than when she's angry. And for the past couple of months she has been very angry indeed, since Britain's Olympic heptathlete Denise Lewis hired Dr Ekkart Arbeit as her coach.

Twenty years ago Dr Arbeit was the athletics coach for East Germany – and therefore a prominent figure in a regime that systematically pumped its sporting stars full of anabolic steroids. "To imagine him trackside in a tracksuit is simply obscene," Mott raged last week, in her umpteenth column on the subject. "Lewis has provided him with a route back into a sport from which he should have been barred for the rest of his days." She accused Lewis of making "a stupid, damaging, reprehensible decision which she shows no sign at all of revoking. Those who know her say this is typical."

Quite so. It is only a couple of years since Denise Lewis, then a *Telegraph* columnist herself, made the reprehensible decision to reject Sue Mott as ghost-writer on her autobiography – and chose instead Mott's rival from the *Times*, Alison Kervin. Lewis's contract with the *Telegraph* was terminated soon afterwards, and the paper is now pursuing what Lewis describes as a vendetta.

"There is no vendetta," Mott replies. "There is, instead, deep concern that our Olympic gold medallist should consider working with a man who so damaged the image and interests of athletics… With Arbeit in its midst, British athletics will never be free of the taint of drugs."

Maybe so. But why not also mention Linford Christie, who is employed by UK Athletics as a coach to runners such as Katherine Merry despite having been caught using banned anabolic steroids? Or indeed Jurgen Grobler, who coaches top British rowers Matthew Pinsent and James Cracknell? Grobler was East Germany's rowing coach in the 1970s and 1980s, at a time when the GDR's oarsmen and women were drugged up to the gills and won medals galore.

Curiously, the *Torygraph*'s righteous indignation about drug-tainted coaches doesn't seem to extend beyond Dr Arbeit. No doubt it is pure coincidence that Katherine Merry and James Cracknell both write columns for the sports section of… the *Daily Telegraph*.

RICHARD Littlejohn and Simon Heffer need to sharpen up a bit: a new contender for the title of Britain's angriest hack has emerged. He is Andrew Parkes, editor of the *News Shopper*, a Kentish freesheet.

In a no-nonsense editorial two weeks ago, headed "Wipe Out This Scum", Parkes made an impassioned plea for the introduction of South American death squads in the home counties to kill four young men who had been convicted of taking and driving away cars without the owners' consent – plus, in the case of one of them, handling a stolen bird cage.

In Brazil, he claimed, "scumbags" who nick cars and birdcages receive violent retribution. "It's difficult to justify vigilantism at any time but I can't help wondering if it wouldn't be better for all concerned if these weren't just 'disposed of'… It might be a step too far to suggest they should die a painful death, but I'm rapidly coming to the conclusion it would be better for all concerned to put them swiftly and cheaply out of their misery."

Parkes says that David Blunkett has previously praised the *News Shopper* for its anti-crime campaigns. Whether the home secretary will now endorse the call for petty criminals to be put to death remains to be seen.

HACKWATCH

Nigel Dempster

HUMPTY Dumpster had a great fall. Or, rather, a crash. After drinking a bottle of wine he drove his Honda into a lamp-post; the car then spun across a zebra crossing and overturned. Following a 10-day trial at Richmond magistrates' court, he has now been found guilty of driving with excess alcohol.

"When he [Dempster] was asked straightforwardly if he had had anything to drink, he answered 'no'," district judge Paul Clark observed. "I find as a fact that was untrue. To put it bluntly, Mr Dempster lied… If somebody had been using that pedestrian crossing something very serious indeed could have occurred." He said Dumpster's behaviour was "beyond contempt".

Does the *Daily Mail* think it newsworthy that one of its top hacks has been officially branded a liar? Apparently not, since it carried not one word about the case, even though the paper has been campaigning for much tougher sentences for drunken drivers. But alert readers of Dumpster's *Mail* diary might guess that something was up, not least from the obsessive frequency with which certain themes recur these days…

29 May: The Duke of Gloucester, a motorbike fanatic, tells Dempster he is filling in a questionnaire about his passion. "I've been asked things like: 'Do you speed if your friends encourage you to?'" So does he? The Duke sighs. "You can't speed in London because of all the cameras."

30 May: For many years, the standard police rebuke to daredevil drivers was: "Who do you think you are – Stirling Moss?" Lo and behold, today Dempster informs readers that "motor racing legend Sir Stirling Moss" is off to Monaco to watch the Grand Prix.

5 June: Five days into his trial, Dempster leaves his underling Helen Minsky in charge of the diary. One item, headed "Frayn Raises His Glass", has a photo of Michael Frayn brandishing a champagne glass, above the caption "He'll have a triple". But the story itself has nothing to do with booze: it's about Frayn needing triple glazing in his new house to keep out traffic noise. So why all the irrelevant references to booze? Is Minsky perchance trying to tell Nigel something?

6 June: "Dempster's Derby Diary." Small print at the foot of page reveals that the today's column is again "edited by Helen Minsky"; yet it is embellished with Nigel's mugshot and a curious drawing of a top hat colliding with a champagne bottle. Is this another coded message?

9 June: "Champagne-guzzling Neil and Christine Hamilton have been imbibing at a University of York Wine Society reception," Dempster reports, "after Christine, who graduated at York, agreed to be the group's new patron. Apart from her love of the grape, Christine says she accepted the invitation because she rather liked the society's guiding maxim: Oxford spits, York swallows. 'I thought with a motto like that, I've just got to do it,' hiccups Christine."

11 June: While other national newspapers report Dumpster's criminal conviction, Humpty himself focuses on a far more interesting tale. "Once found horizontally refreshed, Lord Freddie Windsor looked decidedly sober yesterday as he strode along High Street Kensington, dressed in a bespoke grey suit, pressed blue shirt and red tie." Man walks along street, apparently sober! Not much of a story, you might think, but Dempster clearly regards it as quite an achievement.

13 June: Another great scoop: Lord Brocket attended an art exhibition in Cork Street this week, which allows Dempster to remind us that Brocket once served a jail sentence for his part in a "car fraud".

15 June: According to Dumpster, Prince Charles is "worried sick" by Prince William's "growing interest in high-speed motorbikes" – and "has now put his foot down" over Prince Harry's love of speed. "Like many a concerned father before him, Charles has told his 18-year-old son: 'No motorbike.'" Still, there are always cars…

16 June: Boris Becker and his former wife have visited San Lorenzo in Knightsbridge — "and had a light drink in the bar upstairs before walking down to their table". Man and woman manage to walk down stairs after drinking! Dempster cannot conceal his admiration.

17 June: "Polo fans watched in amazement," a horrified Dempster reports, "as Prince Harry left Cirencester Park on Sunday and sped away in a VW Golf, leaving a trail of dust — just as 'yobbish' Prince William had done the day before." One onlooker tells Dumpster: "The car that Harry left in looked like it was doing a ton judging by the amount of dust it created." Meanwhile, Dempster records "another royal road incident" at the entrance to the Guards Polo Club, where Chelsea nightclub manager Jonathan Kaye had stopped by the roadside to chat to a friend. "Prince Philip nearly ran me over," Kaye complains. "I think he saw the whites of my eyes." While at the polo, Dumpster stumbles on another scoop: "Wealthy shipbroker Simon Ropner was nursing a hangover…"

18 June: "Dempster's Royal Ascot Diary" reveals that everyone who is anyone was at the races yesterday. Such as? Well, er, the Danish fashion designer Isabell Kristensen (*Who she? – Ed.*) A photo shows Isabell flanked by two policemen, and Dempster notes that she "proved an arresting sight".

Arresting! Geddit?! Dumpster certainly does. Last week he was fined £1,500 and banned from driving for two years. Can no one put poor Humpty together again?

"That's enough Sarah, you don't win any friends with salad"

ALTHOUGH it's true that Nigel Dempster hasn't been in the best of health lately, his *Daily Mail* colleague Quentin Letts may be taking too bleak a view of his prognosis. He has just dashed off an obituary of the great man for the *Daily Telegraph*.

Those who have seen it say it is a hilarious piece of work. Maybe just this once the *Telegraph* could break with tradition and show the obit to its subject. Heaven knows, Dumpster could do with a good laugh.

THE NEOPHILIACS

"Gay is the new black." — Gary Younge, *Guardian*.

"Wednesday is the new Sunday." — Publicity bumf from St James church, Clerkenwell.

"Cheese is the new chocolate." — *Living South* mag.

"Knitting is the new yoga." — Lara Zamiatin, *Weekend Australian* magazine.

"At the risk of offending *Private Eye*, ballet has to be the new yoga." — Fran Webb, *Independent*.

"Teamwork is regarded as the new sex." — *Metro*.

"Dead is the new alive." — Fiona Lawrenson, *The Joy of Gardening*, BBC2.

"Old is the new new." — Advert for Old Charm furniture.

"If snacks are the new meals, are drinks the new snacks?" — Just-drinks.com daily news alert.

"Are pigeon the new grouse?" — *The Field*.

IN THE TEAROOM

SO, is Peter Hain licking his wounds, after being "gagged" and "humiliated" by both the PM and the chancellor merely for thinking aloud about the long-term direction of tax policy? Not a bit of it. He's congratulating himself on a deftly executed manoeuvre. In one bound Hain has leapt from the obscurity of the wrong end of the cabinet table to become a real contender – one now widely tipped as a future chancellor or even a future prime minister.

In times like these, there's nothing better guaranteed to raise your political profile than being slapped down by Tony Blair and called a "moron" by Gordon Brown on the same day. It's made the new leader of the house a walking third way. If Hain were to team up with education secretary Charles Clarke, playing wannabe chancellor to Clarke's wannabe PM, under the banner of a "Kinnockite" revival, the pair could present the only plausible alternative to Brown's succession.

Alternatively, if Hain were to team up with Gordon, the chancellor would be a shoo-in. So why the "moron" jibe? Shouldn't Brown want to recruit Hain as an ally? Sadly, it's yet another example of that psychological instability Alastair Campbell detected long ago. The chancellor regards Hain as the continuation of Robin Cook by other means. And for reasons only understood by those involved in Edinburgh university politics 30 years ago, the chancellor recoils from anyone who's been close to Robin Cook, as if from a noxious smell.

The more level-headed Brownites want their boss to effect a rapprochement with this new force in Labour politics. All Hain needs, they argue, is an hour-long tutorial on the Laffer Curve – the insight of an American economist that if you put up marginal rates of tax, the total tax-take can actually shrink. And it's not as if a reluctance to accept that the Laffer rule always and everywhere applies is a sure sign of intellectual inadequacy. In the run-up to the 1997 election it was Tony Blair who ruled out any increase in the top rate of income tax – after a putative 50 percent band had been floated by... er... "sources close to Gordon Brown".

'Urquhart'

OF COURSE it was no coincidence that Peter Hain chose to fire his broadside on tax at the second annual lecture of the Aneurin Bevan Foundation in Cardiff.

The foundation was set up by Labour MP Hywel Francis, and counts as its supporters several Welsh luminaries such as Northern Ireland secretary Paul Murphy and former firebrand MP Kim Howells. Hain may have been pleased by the reaction to his speech, but his immediate u-turn left the assembled comrades and old-style trades unionists fuming. They hadn't travelled from all over Wales to hear a retraction that read like a passage from the "new" Labour rule book circa 1996: "no return to punitive taxation rates" (read the 1970s Labour government) and "no return to tax and spend". At this rate the Bevan Foundation will be better off printing ministers' speeches before they are delivered and before they are rewritten to read the opposite of what they were meant to say.

IT HAS been traditional for successive Labour party leaders to take the salute at the annual Durham Miners' Gala.

So far the honourable member for Sedgefield, constituency address, Trimdon Colliery, Co Durham, has failed to grace the event with his presence, citing urgent business. This year Tony Blair has not even bothered to reply.

IN the chaos and confusion surrounding the reshuffle, Tony Blair was keen to trumpet one impressive fact: he had appointed Margaret Hodge as the government's first children's minister, answering to Charles Clarke, the education secretary.

This must have come as news to Beverly Hughes, who on 22 May was given a new brief in the home office: that of minister for children and young people. She was already the third person to occupy the position this year (this was the job from which John Denham resigned in protest at the war with Iraq in March, and Hilary Benn served just over two months in the role before being shifted to the international development office when Clare Short left the cabinet.) Hughes, who also has responsibility for citizenship, immigration and community cohesion, managed an impressive three weeks in the job before all its powers were transferred to the department for education and skills – a record even new health secretary John Reid would be proud of.

THE government has admitted that it will take between 18 months and three years to frame the necessary legislation that will establish a judicial appointments commission to take over from the lord chancellor. In the meantime, Lord Falconer will continue to be in charge of choosing who gets to sit on the bench.

This is a situation which one MP considers totally unacceptable. As he put it in an impassioned Commons statement last week: "It is increasingly anomalous for a minister – and an unelected one at that – to choose judges in that way." His name? Tony Blair, attempting to justify his appointment of his old flatmate, who has never been anywhere near a ballot box, to the post. With a prime minister so capable of arguing against himself, who needs Iain Duncan Smith?

Number Crunching

5 ■ Cabinet members who resigned during "new" Labour's first five years in power

5 ■ Cabinet members who resigned in the last five months

LABOUR's cranky general-secretary David Triesman is refusing to give a timetable for the internal investigation into rebel MP George Galloway, suspended from the party after giving an interview to Abu Dhabi television during the Iraq war in which he accused George Bush and Tony Blair of behaving "like wolves".

Hilariously, the task of investigating Galloway falls to Triesman's deputy, Chris Lennie, like Triesman also something of a former Spart. Yet it transpires that Galloway is not the only one to have made controversial remarks about Iraq worthy of suspension and investigation.

In September 2000 the government was under fire and being likened to Big Brother, with its Thought Police suppressing free thinking. The author of the attack in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* went further, lumping the UK government with Iran and Iraq in its failure to endorse a Unesco convention enshrining academic freedom.

And who launched this savage attack? Step forward the then general-secretary of the Association of University Teachers, Dave Tries-spart!

Jonathan Bonk, editor of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research

The Grauniad

A Hundred Years Ago...

LIKE many figures of moderation in government, the recently resigned Alan Milburn *(see pic)* **was once a firebrand of the far left.**

Milburn belonged to the International Marxist Group, stamping ground for, among others, Tariq Ali. He was never seen out in public without his CND badge and he led a heroic but doomed campaign to save Tyneside's shipyards.

Not long before his conversion to "new" Labour, Mr Tony and foundation hospitals, Alan led another heroic campaign against what he saw as "the creeping privatisation of our NHS". The man who would one day open the NHS to the sort of market reforms even the Tories could only dream of, was adamant that pay-to-view televisions that could be wheeled around hospital wards were the thin edge of the wedge. They had to be stopped (but they weren't).

WITH GM sceptic Michael Meacher now on the backbenches, the government's determination to thrust commercially grown GM crops and food on a sceptical public will be even more difficult – as the weekend's overwhelmingly "anti" publicity about bacteria in the human gut and the proliferation of superweeds illustrated.

Meanwhile government advisers at the agriculture and environment biotechnology commission (AEBC) are poised to produce another tricky report on GM crops called *Coexistence, Choice and Redress*. While apparently setting out to show how GM and non-GM can live side by side, providing "choice" for farmers and public alike, an early draft actually reveals how difficult this will be.

For example, getting local agreement on where GM crops should be planted and guaranteeing that they do not contaminate neighbouring crops would be problematic. So would meeting standards demanded by consumers and supermarkets: products containing less than 0.1 percent of GM material.

Moreover, who would be liable for compensating those found to have lost out because of contamination: the farmer, the pharmaceutical company or the government? And how would compensation apply to irreversible environmental damage?

Despite the suggestion that these issues could be resolved via a series of crop protocols governing handling and use with the possibility of a no-fault compensation scheme, the report provides scant evidence that GM and non-GM really can live happily side by side.

An AEBC spokesman stressed the report was a "very early draft" and a new version would be available soon. No doubt some of the more obvious concerns will be removed from it. For example, British beekeepers and honey producers have agreed to a six-mile separation from trial sites. As the author of the AEBC report recognises, however, that might not be practical with commercial growing all over the country.

"The crucial issue is how to maintain public perception of honey as wholesome fresh and pure," it says, commenting in brackets that ("perhaps re-organise... bee-keepers are a rather down-beat note on which to end".) We await the upbeat version of the report with impatience.

DOWN ON THE FARM

THE Beloved Leader may not have told Gordon Brown, but thanks to a clever plan being hatched between France and Germany over farm subsidies, he is now in serious danger of losing rather a large sum of money: namely Britain's EU budget rebate, worth £3bn a year.

The start of this plot came about with the penny dropping in Brussels that, when central European countries such as Poland enter the EU next May, even the limited subsidies they have been promised for their millions of farmers will be enough to reduce the EU to bankruptcy.

The response of agriculture commissioner Frans Fischler was to launch a desperate bid to hold down runaway spending on the common agricultural policy, currently running at £30bn or half the entire EU budget. Top of his agenda was the need to end those "production subsidies" which encourage farmers to over-produce by giving them cash for whatever they grow.

This would also provide a solution to the *impatience* of the World Trade Organisation at how the EU continues to dump vast quantities of subsidised food at knock-down prices on the world market, inflicting untold damage on the economies of scores of countries, ranging from Senegal to Australia. Unless the EU comes up with a remedy for this scandal by the next WTO talks in September, many poorer countries plan to walk out in disgust.

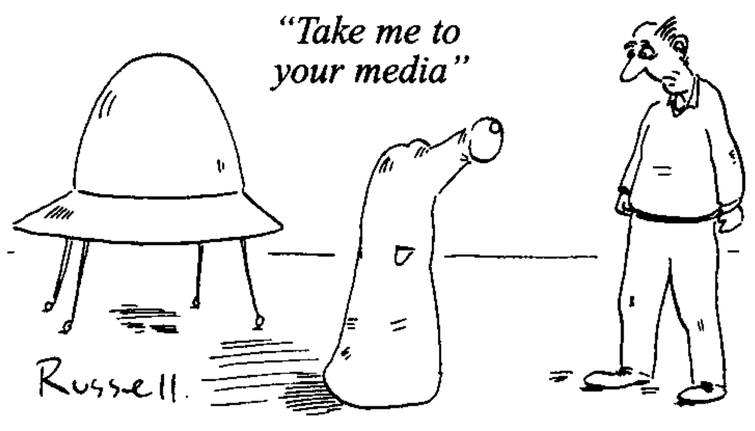
Predictably the French were outraged. Having set up the CAP in the first place primarily as a benefit system for their own farmers, they were determined to sabotage Fischler's plans. There was no way they were willing to accept the loss of a fruit machine which gives their farmers far more than anyone else in the EU, mainly at the expense of German and UK taxpayers. But for a while Fischler's scheme seemed to be winning a dangerous amount of support, not least from Germany and Britain. Suddenly, however, came the shock news that France and Germany had joined forces to block the Fischler plan.

The explanation was a classic EU stitch-up. The Germans had become so desperate for French support in blocking a directive which would have challenged the powers of its regional governments over German industry, that they agreed in return to make a complete U-turn on farm policy.

So far as the WTO and the third world are concerned, the French couldn't care less. If this leads in September to the EU being again accused of screwing up the world economy by dumping its surpluses, so be it. What really matters to the French and the Germans is that they have found a pot of gold to pay for those subsidies to the Poles and other eastern European farmers without breaking the EU bank. All they need, for the years after 2006, is another £3bn a year, and – bingo! – they have found it.

Recently the agenda of the EU's budget control committee has repeatedly made reference to the UK's budget rebate, negotiated through years of acrimonious argument by Mrs Thatcher. With full backing from President Prodi, the French and the Germans are now determined that Mr Blair should hand it over. After all, he would not like to be put in the dock as the man who blocked "enlargement". Gordon Brown will not be best pleased at having to cough up another £3bn a year. But to keep Britain "at the heart of Europe", what a small price to pay!

'Muckspreader'



Number crunching

9,000

■ People who responded to 'consultancy exercise' on regional assemblies

£90m

■ Amount the government is spending on referenda as a result

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CRÈME DE LA CRÈME

Latest Appointments

THE government isn't content just handing over public services to private firms via the private finance initiative (PFI). Labour is also hiring managers from the same firms to help redesign the ailing PFI.

Richard Osborne used to be a director of PFI specialist Amey. Then last July the firm hit a financial crisis and he was ousted from his £235,555-a-year job. Shedding Osborne wasn't enough to save Amey, however, which this year went bust and was sold to a Spanish building company.

But never mind. This dismal record has not deterred chancellor Gordon Brown from appointing Osborne as an associate director of Partnerships UK (PUK), the government's official PFI adviser. Thus Osborne is now in charge of Labour's drive to refurbish or rebuild every secondary school in Britain via PFI.

Before stepping down as a cabinet minister, Lord Gus Macdonald recently put the banker behind the disastrous privatisation of air traffic control in charge of British Nuclear Fuels, The Royal Mail and the Royal Mint.

Richard Gillingwater, of Credit Suisse First Boston, starts work as the new chief executive of the shareholder executive in September. The job is so important that his salary – £200,000 – is larger even than the prime minister's.

The shareholder executive is a new body based in the cabinet office which will take command of state-owned industries like BNFL.

When Gordon Brown announced the executive's formation last November, he said it would "maximise efficiency in dealing with the government's own businesses". And what better man to "maximise efficiency" than Gillingwater. He led the CSFB team advising the government on the privatisation of air traffic control. It was such a disaster that immediately after the sale NATS needed a multimillion pound bail-out from the government and is currently looking at another £50m hole in its accounts.

Happily the deal *was* a success for CSFB, however, which walked away with nearly £4m in fees. It billed for a fixed monthly fee regardless of the amount of work involved; and this led the national audit office to observe: "The absence of documentary evidence means that it is not possible to conclude whether payments to CSFB were justified."

At CSFB Gillingham also advised on the restructuring of BNFL – another state-owned firm facing huge losses. CSFB earned £6m for its advice on BNFL, but the privatisation failed. Gillingham also advised the government on what to do about British Energy. As a result, the government bailed the firm out with millions but any improvement in British Energy's performance has yet to materialise.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

SLEAZE-ridden EU officials may have automatic immunity from prosecution, but from next year it will be much easier for European citizens to be charged of offences.

The European arrest warrant, set to become law in January, will allow citizens of any EU member state to be plucked from their homes and tried abroad, even for crimes that do not exist in their homeland. Part of the extradition bill which is currently before parliament, the plan has already been criticised in the Lords for depriving British citizens of "key safeguards" that are part of our legal system, and denounced as yet another attempt to set up a single European criminal justice system by stealth – Corpus Juris (see *Eyes passim*).

At present the EU only has responsibility for laws on economic affairs, though observers have noted a "creeping extension" of its powers into other areas. European parliament officials explained to a House of Lords select committee in 1999 that they plan to introduce Corpus Juris through article 280 of the Nice treaty by majority voting, rather than seek approval by treaty for such a fundamental change.

At present the European court of justice can only decide cases on EU directives and cases infringing community law. But the European police office, Europol, traditionally an information exchange between member states, has already been asked to compile a database of EU "troublemakers" by the council of ministers. It goes without saying that Europol officers are, like their political masters, immune from prosecution, their annual reports are secret and their officers are not accountable to the European parliament.

HIGH PRINCIPALS

THOUSANDS of University of London (UL) students have been left a parting gift by former higher education minister Margaret Hodge, who was made minister for children in the government reshuffle.

The minister left behind plans to slash £910 in London loan weighting for more than 4,000 UL students who study outside the Metropolitan police district in areas like Potter's Bar, which colleges and student unions claim are equally expensive.

Though not herself averse to large loans (she was leader of Islington council when it racked up debts of nearly £1bn), the minister told principals at Royal Holloway, the Royal Veterinary College and Imperial College's Wye campus that their weighting status would end from this autumn.

The principals' angry replies, calling the cuts hasty, unfair and ill-informed, forced Mrs Hodge to agree, grudgingly, to a consultation period, although she warned she was "still considering making the change with effect from 2005/06".

The principals' fears that Hodge had ignored "serious arguments and considerations" seem well-grounded. A department for education and skills (DfES) policy official told the UL newspaper, *London Student*, that the department has no idea if the targeted students actually have lower living costs.

"Regional indices… are basically by region, and so cannot provide local comparisons," he explained.

The official said DfES was less concerned with "whether students will choose to go to those colleges if they have to pay more" than with "an issue of fairness". The minister told principals that the current system "unfairly disadvantaged" students at "neighbouring colleges", although both the official and the principals were at a loss as to which colleges she was referring to.

It is not yet clear how keen Hodge's successor, Alan Johnson, will be to push through the cuts; but, the official said, for legal reasons a final decision will be made "by the end of this calendar year".

FIVE

Ultimate Force (ITV1)
Death By Home (BBC1)
Imagine (BBC1)

IN the books business, Christmas and summer are the two best times of year, with people buying books first to give away and then to take away. This rule is half-true in television. The medium puts in a big effort at santa-time but gives up at sand-time. With people lying on beaches reading books, why fill up the box?

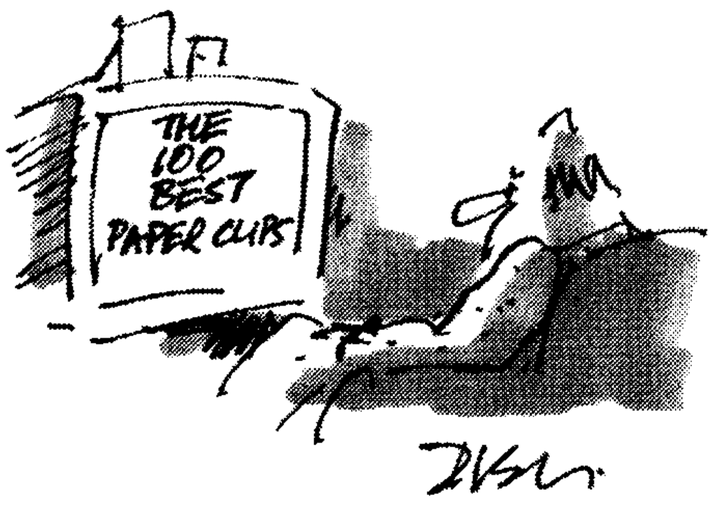
So we get stuck with stuff like **Ultimate Force** which, as it happens, is a bit of synergy between books and TV. Rob Heyland's series is aimed at all those lads in the audience who have only ever read one book: Andy McNab's *Bravo Two Zero*. Ross Kemp plays Henno Garvie, leader of an SAS outfit.

Kemp is the Prince Charles of British television. Although the two men are dissimilar in appearance and background, both are struggling to find a role. It's even worse in Kemp's case because he once had one — Grant in *EastEnders* — before giving it up to pursue the now common delusion among actors and agents that there can be life after soap.

But there are few plausible parts for a burly, shaven-headed Cockney whom the audience still thinks of as a Mitchell brother. So Ross, under an ITV contract, has played a series of security guards, bent coppers and now Henno of the special services, which has been successful enough to run to a second series.

It begins with Henno sitting at home listening to *The Archers*, which is supposed to be a joke against the character but has the feel of a gag about Kemp or Grant Mitchell, thus emphasising the baggage the actor brings. But Henno is soon growling a lot and storming suspicious ships and, despite the occasional surprise in the writing — one of the characters seems to be hinting at being gay — it all ends in a firestorm which will keep the McNab fans happy.

What's depressing about this — and typical of the stuff that gets shoved into summer — is that it faces viewers with what they think they know about an actor and what they think they know about the SAS and then confirms both prejudices. Compare that with BBC1's *Spooks*, which may have its silly side — top agents who carry hair-gel rather than cyanide in their secret capsules — but which can be genuinely inventive and surprising.



BBC1, though, is far from exempt from the summer slump. If ITV's *Ultimate Force* was tabloid TV in an oblique way — Ross Kemp's wife happens to be editor of the *Sun* — the main public-service channel's **Death By Home** is red-top television in inspiration and execution.

Presented by "Handy" Andy Kane — always be wary of a presenter with a silly nick-name — this was a dim visual version of all those newspaper articles about the hidden dangers lurking in the home. Chip-pan Fire: The Movie, in fact, although at least tips can be given on how to stop a frying pan catching fire, whereas many of the examples in this programme could be solved by one person being sectioned rather than millions given advice. Someone who puts food on the stove and then leaves the house for a couple of hours can only be offered for the amusement of others rather than the instruction.

The execs will say that the bottom-end stuff can be tolerated because there's a top-end as well. But the summer's big broadsheet launch is also looking strangely tabloid. Botney's **Imagine** has been billed as ever-so beardy, serious and licence-fee-saving. But it became the first flagship arts programme to begin with several minutes of naked bodies, a viewer-grabbing manoeuvre just about justified by the fact that it was happening outside the gallery owned by Charles Saatchi, the first subject.

As a cynical ratings grabber, it worked brilliantly, although briefly. The stats show that around four million viewers tuned in for the nudity but that almost half switched off or over as soon as the naked flesh gave way to Alan Yentob, leaving barely two million.

Viewers who stayed got a film which never at any point explained or criticised the art that Saatchi collects. In the second week, it was sculptor Barbara Hepworth, though considered in the context of being a working mother: the Kate Reddy of 20th century art. Because Hepworth never got her kit off, the audience stayed small. A giveaway announcement at the end of the film directed the audience to *The Art Of Barbara Hepworth*, starting now on BBC4."

There've been worries for some time that BBC arts films are putting the life before the work — drama-docs about the sex-lives of Larkin and Byron are on the way — but here was the division formalised and declared: Hepworth as mother and lover on BBC1; Hepworth as artist on BBC4. The ghettoisation of serious arts could not be more vividly demonstrated. It's gonna be a long summer.

'Remote Controller'

MEDIA NEWS

THE financial squeeze at ITN, following the reduction of its contract to supply news on ITV for £36m (down from a previous £45m), continues to be reflected in "news" output.

The replacement of foreign coverage with a low-cost diet of domestic human interest and celeb "stories" has long been a feature of its ITV service. But now even its flagship (and generally superb) *Channel Four News* is showing signs that pockets are emptying fast. Two big recent foreign stories – student unrest in Iran and fighting at Bunia in the Congo – were dealt with by Reuters correspondents on the end of a phone.

The disastrous new contract is not the only problem for ITN. The equally cash-strapped ITV managed to stump up a mere £5m to cover the cost of ITN's Gulf War outlay – a drop in the ocean compared to other news organisations.

THE introduction of a "hand coach" at BBC News has made reporters more self-conscious than ever. Gestures of emphasis are now carefully choreographed and only Andrew Marr gets away with an individual style of eccentric windmilling.

Most of his colleagues make do with either the "solo handshake gesture", the "double-handed gentle egg-box shake" or the "superglued fingertip special".

THE UK History Channel continues to delight viewers thanks to the rigorous standards of research of its programme makers.

For example, a recent edition of *Combat at Sea,* about the American war in the Pacific, featured a voiceover that claimed: "America's most valuable assets were the fighting men of the United States Navy." Alas, the pictures it accompanied included footage of the destruction of HMS Barham, a ship crewed by their Royal Navy allies.

HAVING decided that the current BBC staff ID card is "too corporate", the Beeb is introducing an alternative "which is more creative and exciting and reflects the BBC today".

The move follows the traditional "process of design, redesign and consultation" – which is precisely the sort of "crap" director-general Greg Dyke promised to cut. There are three designs currently up for a vote, one including a new name area "with larger first name for ease when meeting others": ie Greg Dyke will be replaced by **Greg** Dyke.

Another option features a montage of words like "quality", "working together" and "audiences" – corporate buzzwords for an even more corporate card than ever before. Thanks, licence-payers.

DUMB BRITAIN

BBC Radio Nottingham, Notts and Crosses quiz

Jeff Owen: In which country is Mount Everest?

Contestant (*long pause*): Er, it's not in Scotland, is it?

JO: Which classical composer became deaf in later life: Ludvig van...?

Same contestant (*immediate answer*): Van Gogh.

Get Your Own Back, BBC Prime

Presenter: Where is the Sea of Tranquility?

Contestant: Weston-super-Mare.

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Which novel by Compton McKenzie was about the wrecking of a ship loaded with alcoholic spirits?

Contestant: The Mayflower.

DODGY independent producer Lion Television has landed itself in hot water – again. This time the problem is over *The Real Amy Johnson*, a Channel 4 documentary about the 1930s flying legend whose disappearance during the war prompted dozens of madcap conspiracy theories.

Lion fell hook line and sinker for the most discredited theory of the lot: that Johnson was shot down by friendly fire. Oddly the programme didn't offer one iota of evidence to support the contention. Odder still, Johnson's biographer had specifically told the production team that the idea was ludicrous.

The Real Amy Johnson was due for broadcast earlier in the year but was postponed when this rather glaring fault was brought to Channel 4's attention. The delay made little difference, however. After transmission two weeks ago, a letter from air-buff Belinda Sinclair in the *Daily Mail* listed other elementary errors: "Amy did not fly to Australia in a two-seater Moth bi-plane – she went in a single seat Gypsy Moth… She did not crash on touchdown in Australia… Her parents did not disapprove of her Swiss lover… He was not already married…" And so on.

This is the latest in a series of embarrassing cock-ups by Lion TV. A year ago, its much trumpeted *You're the Manager* – an "interactive" series of four shows a week for six weeks, in which viewers would select the players for Stevenage FC – collapsed only days before it was due to start when it emerged that the production company had no guarantee of access from the Nationwide Conference, despite its fervent promises to the contrary.

Hard on the heels of that debacle came a libel suit from a participant in the BBC's *Castaway*, Ron Copsey, who claimed that Lion TV had fabricated footage to make it look as if he had thrown a chair at a woman. Both Lion and the BBC had to apologise in the high court and pay Copsey £16,000.

9.00 Horizon
The Day We Learned to Think: How a discovery in South Africa could rewrite history regarding the origins of human intelligance.
TV Choice

CRAC is the Central Religious Advisory Committee, which "meets regularly to discuss religious broadcasting issues and advise the BBC, Independent Television Commission and Radio Authority about policies and coverage". So far so dull.

What is rather less dull is the fact that one of its two Anglican members is the Rev Dr Emma Hebblethwaite, described in the "brief biographies of current members" as chaplain of King's College, Cambridge, from 1996 to 2001. Alas, the biography is too brief to mention the reason for her departure: she was obliged to resign when disgruntled college members revealed to the *News of the Screws* that she had been having an affair with the chapel's musical director, Stephen Cleobury. Both were married at the time.

Cleobury managed to keep his job, and the college installed the couple in one of its flats. Hebblethwaite is now expecting a child, presumably by Cleobury, a fact which has prompted more mutterings from disaffected chapel-goers and several visits to Cambridge by *Daily Mirror* hacks in recent weeks.

According to the BBC website, members of CRAC "do not act as delegates from organisations but as individuals who can help to shape religious broadcasting policies and also take account of the views of religious constituencies". And who better to represent the Anglican constituency than someone who has had her priest's orders suspended by the CofE, and is expecting a child out of wedlock?

62 A Life in the Day The man who lives happily with a hippo

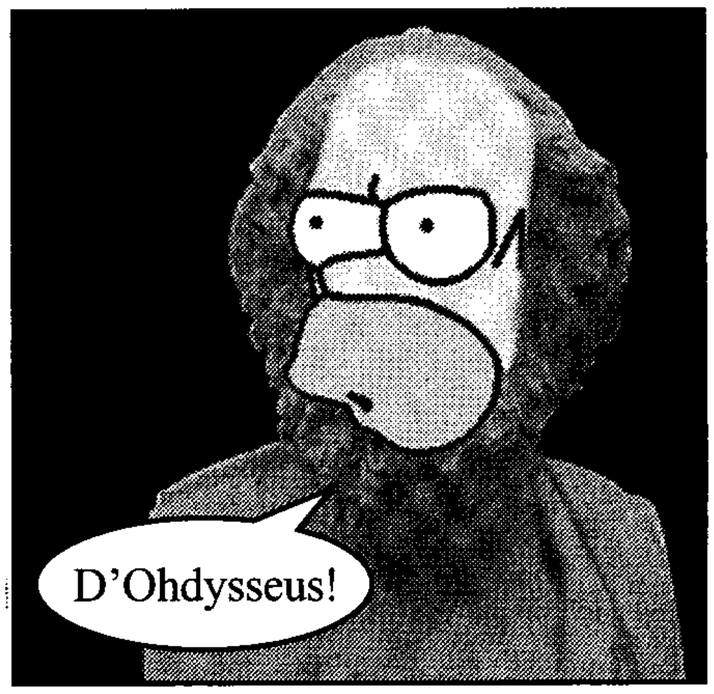
Sunday Times

ALAN YENTOB, stung by criticism that his show *Imagine* relies too much on his personal friends, penned 1,200 words for the *Sunday Times* about hip hop, the subject of this week's episode.

He managed all of five paragraphs before falling back on the most reliable of Al's Pals: "It's not just kids: some of the most unlikely people are fans. Charles Saatchi, for example, loves rap."

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



Homer Simpson

RED faces at the charity Blind in Business, which provides training and support for visually impaired people in the job market.

Having persuaded home secretary David Blunkett to attend a reception at the headquarters of the London Assembly, the charity wrote to inform the guests, most of whom are registered blind, of the arrangements for the evening.

"Security at City Hall is tight, and please be patient if you are delayed a little by it. The panoramic views are worth it."

11.20 BBC4 on BBC2: Dead in the Water
Radio Times

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Mickie has hired four piddling strings. He had a reputation for recording on the cheap and had made a fortune doing it. He had so little belief in 'To Sir, With Love' that he put it out on the B-side of my next single… My own recording career seemed to be stuck in a rut. Mickie Most had turned me into a pure pop singer, and it wasn't the only sort of music I wanted to be credited with. The decision to go with Mickie had seemed like the right one. I used to fight with Mickie, trying to convince him to do material that was more soulful and took advantage of the raw power of my voice. When my contract with Mickie expired, I did not renew it."

— Lulu in her autobiography, *I Don't Want to Fight*, 2002.

"I have a lot to be grateful to him for. It's the end of an era. When someone like Maurice Gibb goes, George Harrison goes and now Mickie Most… We were very close. He's left a tremendous legacy."

— Lulu, interviewed by the BBC, June 2003.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

THE "MICRO-MINI" IS IN!
FASHION HOUSE
IT'S ALL ABOUT CREATING SOMETHING THAT MAKES PEOPLE FEEL GREAT!!!
...AND CHARGING FORTUNES FOR USING HARDLY ANY MATERIAL MAKES ME FEEL REALLY GREAT!!!

SIGNAL FAILURES

SRA satisfies itself

HAVING nailed its colours to Virgin Trains' mast last year, the "strategic" rail authority is strangely reticent about what it takes to keep Richard Branson's boys on the rails.

Last summer the SRA "satisfied itself" that no other operator could do a better job than Virgin on Britain's two biggest franchises and awarded Beardie's crew an extra £106m to tide them over to March 2003 (*Eyes passim*). It gave no firm information about what would happen after that; but last month Virgin Trains chief executive Chris Green wrote to staff: "We have not been able to agree a final budget with the SRA and it is quite clear that further cost reductions will be required." He invited managers and clerical staff to volunteer for severance.

Since train franchises aren't awash with white-collar staff, each job that goes could undermine Virgin Trains' legendary service quality even more. And if the SRA ever does concede that Virgin Trains, 49 percent-owned by Stagecoach, has forfeited its right to one or both franchises, the new operator will have to refill those posts.

For now, the SRA faces the challenge of proving it was right when it "satisfied itself" that Virgin is more cost-effective than any replacement operator would be. Virgin meanwhile is demanding loads more public cash – reportedly more than £450m – after the failure of the upgrade deal for the west-coast mainline which Virgin agreed with Railtrack plc (a deal not underwritten by taxpayers).

The *Eye* asked the SRA some questions: (1) why the SRA still hasn't invited anyone else to bid for Virgin's franchises; (2) how much money Virgin would get from the SRA if it continued both franchises throughout this year; (3) what evaluation process was used to decide this is the most cost-effective option; and (4) when is the SRA planning to publish details of its current agreement with Virgin?

The SRA's response was: "You can be assured that the full weight of NAO [national audit office], PAC [public accounts committee] and the entire voting system of parliament combine to form the checks and balances under which we operate. This ensures the kind of proper processes that we have followed for our decisions about Virgin – and indeed every decision with which we are required to engage across the spectrum of the Railway."

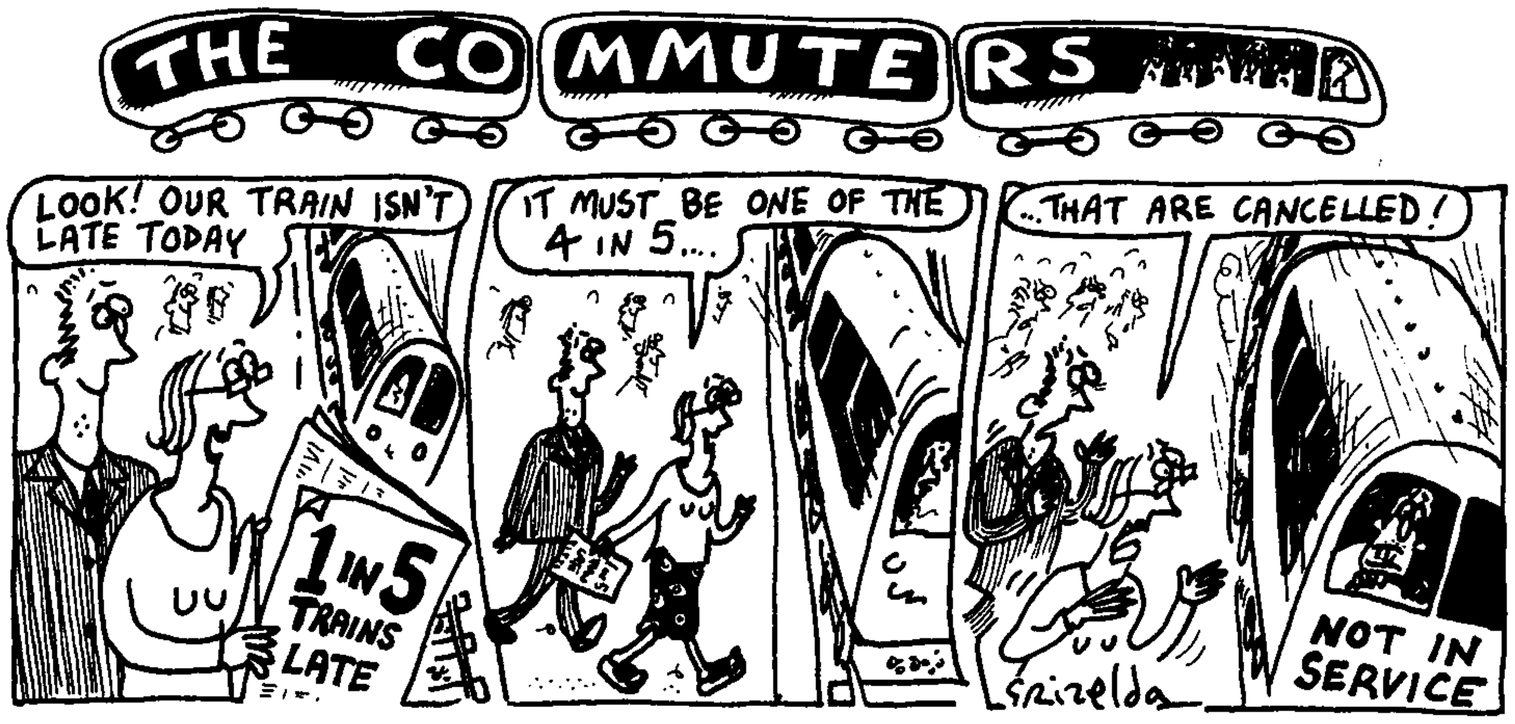
And what about answers to the questions we had actually asked? The SRA replied it had answered all four questions (although no £ sign featured in its response). It added that the best interest of taxpayers and passengers was the sole "standard by which we would ever consider making any decision relating to the use of public money".

In that case the SRA must have changed its policy since last summer, when the best interest of company shareholders was a standard used by the SRA (*Eye* 1069). When SRA chairman *and* chief executive Richard Bowker (former Virgin Rail co-chairman and son of senior Stagecoach executive Roger Bowker) appeared before the transport select committee last November, he was asked if the decision to hand Virgin an extra £106m was taken "because you wanted to prop up, say, Stagecoach, who were having an AGM very rapidly after this discussion took place?" Bowker replied: "The timing of Stagecoach's results announcement was important." Later he was asked: "You have told us consistently this afternoon that the arrangement was basically to stabilise the companies concerned?" To which Bowker replied: "Correct."

The MPs also asked Bowker why no other company was invited to bid for the west-coast franchise when it went pear-shaped. He said the SRA hadn't published its strategy for the west-coast line at the time, so neither it nor other operators knew what would be required from a new franchise. The draft strategy was published last October but there's still no sign of the SRA or another operator taking over.

Bowker also said Virgin "had the expertise and the relevant knowledge" to ensure new trains were brought into service without delays. Presumably he was referring to the expertise that didn't anticipate the new Pendolino trains for the west-coast line would cause serious electrical interference to safety equipment along the tracks (*Eye* 1065). Virgin had promised to get the entire fleet of 55 trains into public use by the end of 2002; but when Bowker was giving his evidence not one was in service. Halfway through 2003 two Pendolinos are in use, but only on the southern end of the mainline and managing only 20 journeys per week between them.

'Dr B. Ching'


THE COMMUTERS
LOOK! OUR TRAIN ISN'T LATE TODAY
1 IN 5 TRAINS LATE
IT MUST BE ONE OF THE 4 IN 5...
..THAT ARE CANCELLED!
NOT IN SERVICE
Grizelda

DOING THE ROUNDS

THE alleged response of Dr John Reid on seeing a panicked Tony Blair on reshuffle morning was "Oh fuck, not health". The response of many NHS staff was "Oh fuck, not John Reid" as one self-deluded macho reformer was replaced by another.

Alan Milburn's surprising discovery of family values after 12 years struck a chord with consultants, many of whom turned down the salary increase offered in a new contract because it would further erode their family time. Trying to force an already workaholic profession with high levels of stress, addiction and suicide to work even harder was always going to be Milburn's undoing. And with the commission of health improvement set to announce a record number of no star trusts, he got out just in time.

Which is more than can be said for Mamade Chattum, a psychiatric nurse beaten to death by a patient at Springfield hospital, Tooting, which is part of the South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS "two star" Trust. With violence against NHS staff at record levels, despite the government's "zero tolerance" policy, such an incident could happen at any hospital. But as one ex-doctor who worked at the trust's Sutton and Springfield sites put it: "It was only a matter of time before the blatant disregard by the trust management for heath and safety issues, dangerous working conditions, the culture of bullying and gross incompetence would lead to a fatality.

"We voiced our concerns repeatedly at every level, from our consultants at Sutton through all the tiers of management. We were met at best by patronising comments and at worst by outright harassment. The consultants at Sutton were apathetic and unsupportive, with some expressing open hostility. All levels of the trust deflected responsibility and accountability.

"I mentioned the potential consequences of a fatality and subsequent corporate manslaughter charges resulting from a dangerous working environment at a number of meetings with management and consultants. The suggestion was laughed at. I was told to stop over-dramatising things. Following the exhaustion of all internal channels of communication, I and another doctor resigned from the trust and informed Health and Safety, the London Deanery, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the London Regional Action Team, CHI and the BMA." What action they took remains to be seen.

The trust should have been alerted by a previous near fatality at Sutton hospital. As the victim, a doctor, explained: "A patient got in to my car whilst on-call and tried to kill me by driving me into a lamppost. The trust's response was to advise me not to complete an incident form. Senior management directly warned us junior doctors not to write letters to external organisations as it gives the trust a bad reputation.

"We followed everything by the book. We took a step-by-step approach to raising our concerns appropriately. I know we did try our best and probably more than most people would have done in our situation, but I cannot help feeling I should have done more."

John Reid inherits an NHS where, despite the extra billions being pumped in at the top, it's still not possible to provide the basics of safe care in a safe environment, even when the whistle is blown as loudly as this. Small wonder staff are yet to be convinced by Miburn's parting boast that he has "turned round" the service.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY

HELLO HOSPITAL, I WAS TOLD TO RING YOU ABOUT MY OPERATION TODAY...
DO YOU HAVE A BED FOR ME?
YES, WE DO...
IT'S UP YOUR STAIRS, PAST YOUR BATHROOM, FIRST DOOR ON THE LEFT...

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

BUNDREDS AND THOUSANDS

IN THE confusion surrounding Tony Blair's botched reshuffle, the appointment of Steve Bundred, former chief executive of Camden council, as £200,000 head of the audit commission, was not widely reported.

Bundred, who has come a long way since his days as an Islington Spartist, left his £130,000 post at Camden to run the local government Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) in January.

One former colleague who will have been choking on his cornflakes at the news is Colin Cornelius. He was an auditor at Hackney council in 1990 when Bundred was finance director. He uncovered a scam concerning kitchen fittings for council homes and produced a report naming the guilty parties. Bundred refused to publish it, because he said it was libellous. So Cornelius gave it to the elected councillors. Contacting councillors was technically in breach of Cornelius's conditions of employment, so he was suspended and later sacked.

It took more than five years for Cornelius's claim for unfair dismissal, at first only upheld in part, to wend its way to the employment appeals tribunal. The appeal succeeded and Cornelius was exonerated. Indeed, said the judges, it had been his duty to discover and expose fraud. They were at a loss to understand why he had been fired.

By now – 1996 – Bundred had become chief executive in Camden. When the local *Camden New Journal* reported the story, Bundred told them Cornelius's report into corruption at Hackney had contained "numerous false allegations". Cornelius, unhappy at having his name besmirched after a five-year battle to clear it, sued Bundred for libel, and received £10,000 damages out-of-court.

Interestingly, in 1998 his deputy Amanda Kelly had accused Bundred and Camden council of sex discrimination and bullying at an employment tribunal. She, too, settled out of court – for £90,000. The case cost hundreds of thousands of pounds in legal fees. All these figures might be worth an audit.

DEVON AND HELL

THE audit commission's "comprehensive performance assessment" process, which saw league tables of larger councils published last year, is now reaching smaller authorities with a series of pilot "peer challenges" in which officers from other authorities go in and give district councils' own self-assessments the once-over. The verdict following such an inspection at Torridge district council in North Devon was damning.

There was a lack of "focus, vision and direction" said the inspection team drawn from South Shropshire and Forest of Dean councils. Employees had to put up with "persistent and widespread bullying", resulting in a "climate of fear". Staff morale was like a soufflé – "it could collapse at any time".

All of which will have provided little comfort to the family of Antony Hosegood, 61, who was TDC's environmental services contracts manager for 14 years until he hanged himself last year while suffering from depression arising from "stress at work" according to a coroner, who recorded a verdict of suicide.

Announcing an inquiry into the findings, Independent council leader Pat Ferguson, who took over from the Lib Dems' Mervyn Lane on 1 May, was quick to say bullying would "not be tolerated" at Torridge. Feebly, however, she told the local press it was "up to the individuals concerned if they want to resign". And, nearly a month after announcing the "independent" inquiry, the council has yet to appoint a chairman, independent or otherwise.

● LIVERPOOL'S orgy of self-congratulation at being nominated for European "capital of culture" 2008 might be a little easier to take were the council not engaged in an ongoing programme of selling off much of the city library's vast collection of sheet music, with the result that musicians in the region in search of rare scores must trek to the British Library or trawl the stock of private dealers who have bought much of the "unwanted" material. But the council is unrepentant: "Our priority is to stock stuff of interest to the vast majority of people in Liverpool and we are proud of that," says its spokesman. So there.

BLOOMSBURIED

ISLE OF WIGHT council has just granted permission for a four-storey block of flats on a clifftop at Totland, which will entail the demolition of Wilmington, the "enchantingly pretty" former home of Bloomsbury writer Violet Hammersley, along with the fine murals, thought to be by Duncan Grant, which it contains.

Other literary visitors to the house included Nancy Mitford, Christopher Isherwood and Rosamond Lehmann. All protests fell on deaf ears after planning officers bizarrely designated the house and garden a "brownfield site" and IoW "conservation" officer Ian Smith pooh-poohed the idea of listing the building. Back in 1990 (*Eye* 750) Smith also opposed doing anything to save nearby Dimbola, former home of the pioneering Victorian photographer Julia Margaret Cameron (whom most IoW councillors had never heard of), recently the subject of a successful exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. In that case local enthusiasts managed to scrape enough money together to buy the property, which is now run as a popular museum of photography.

The owner and prospective developer of Wilmington is Dr Mark Patterson, an NHS consultant haematologist and local landlord (known on the Island as "Dr Blood") who served a jail sentence in the 1990s for illicitly flogging soldiers' blood products while on attachment to the British Army. A council with any vision would surely fight to preserve Wilmington. But this is the Isle of Wight, where, as the *Eye* observed in 1990: "The mediocrities, entrepreneurs and Freemasons who become... councillors seem concerned only not to impede the market forces that are covering [the Island] with banal blocks of flats and holiday homes."

● TIMING is everything in politics. At 7pm on Monday 9 June Westminster city council's finance committee sat down for a four-hour meeting, the main business of which was to discuss the progress of the council's £200m "Customer Services Initiative" (call centre) contract with Vertex, signed last year. At 7.03pm the CSI system crashed after a power surge... and wasn't up again until the following afternoon.

EDUCASHUN EDUCASHUN EDUCASHUN

THE London borough of Wandsworth, which was about to become the first local authority to be taken to the high court for failing to make the most basic provision for disabled children in its care, has thrown in the towel at the last minute.

After battling with Henrietta Spink over provision for her severely disabled son Henry, 15, the council finally agreed just before a judicial review to ensure he gets the educational provision set out in his statement of need by an appeal tribunal two and a half years ago.

It is, however, a hollow victory for the Spinks and 24 other families in the borough who represent just the tip of a huge iceberg. Although they will now get some meagre provision – 20 minutes of speech therapy a week, hydrotherapy, etc – because there is no "test case" other children in Wandsworth and elsewhere in the country will not get what they are entitled to.

Says Mrs Spinks: "I am at a loss for words at how the system operates. The LEAs can flout the law and ignore children's needs and rely on the fact that most parents will not have the energy or the resources to fight like we did."

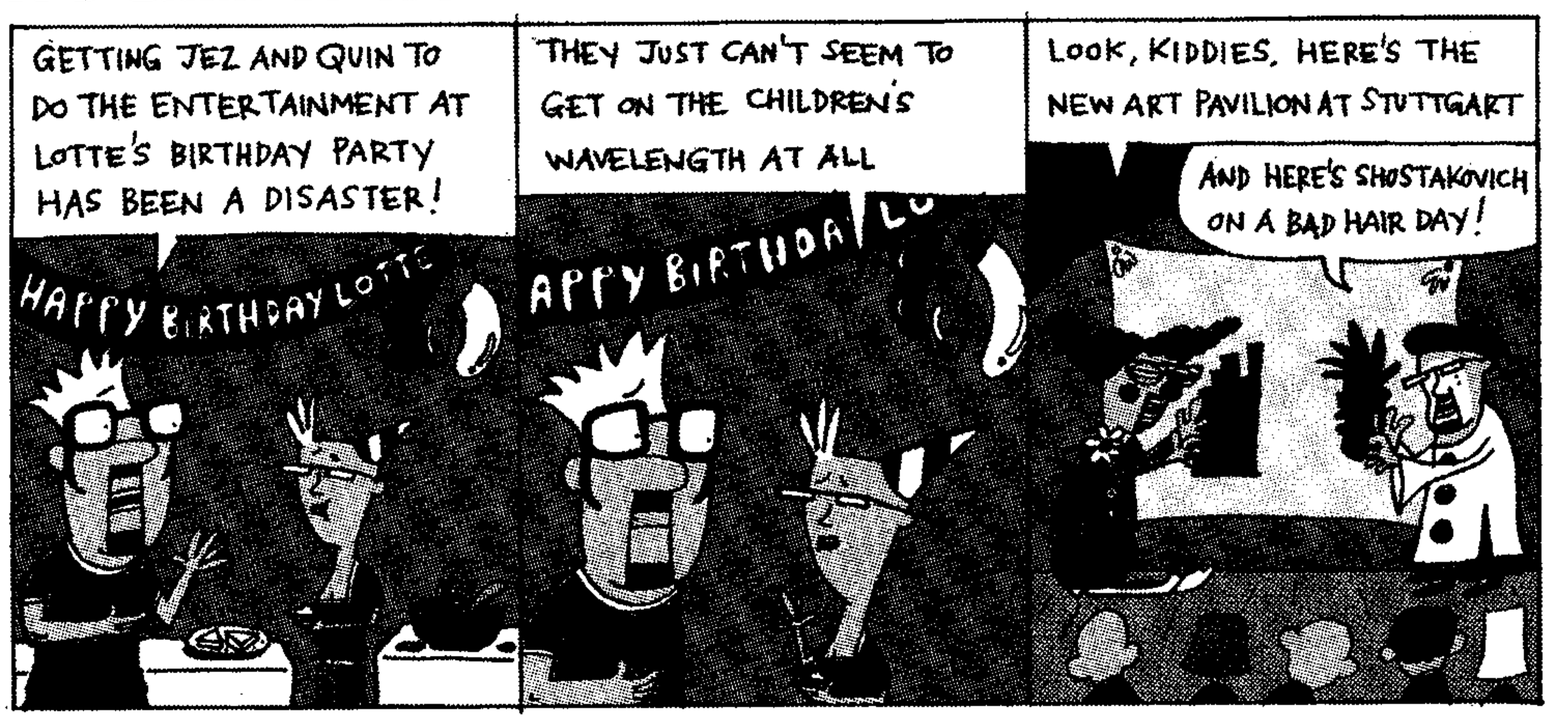
Only last year the audit commission spelt out how badly children with physical or learning disabilities or behavioural problems are failed by the education system and how getting even the most basic provision can be a prolonged, uphill struggle. First parents must get a "statement of need" from the local authority, which is often delayed and a gross "understatement" of need. To challenge the statement, they then have to face a tribunal. Though nearly 90 percent of parents who go to tribunal win their case for better provision, nine out of 10 are too exhausted by caring for their disabled children to fight.

Even after a tribunal victory, children don't always get what they deserve, however. Often local authorities ignore the ruling or provide only part of the package. And when authorities have been found to fail, little can be done about it. The local authority ombudsman to whom the Spinks complained was powerless to intervene.

What makes the Wandworth case so outrageous is that it is a wealthy authority which boasts about its low council tax. It also has a £10m contingency fund. But it is not prepared to touch it for special needs children or for other pupils who face severe cuts in teaching staff and facilities.

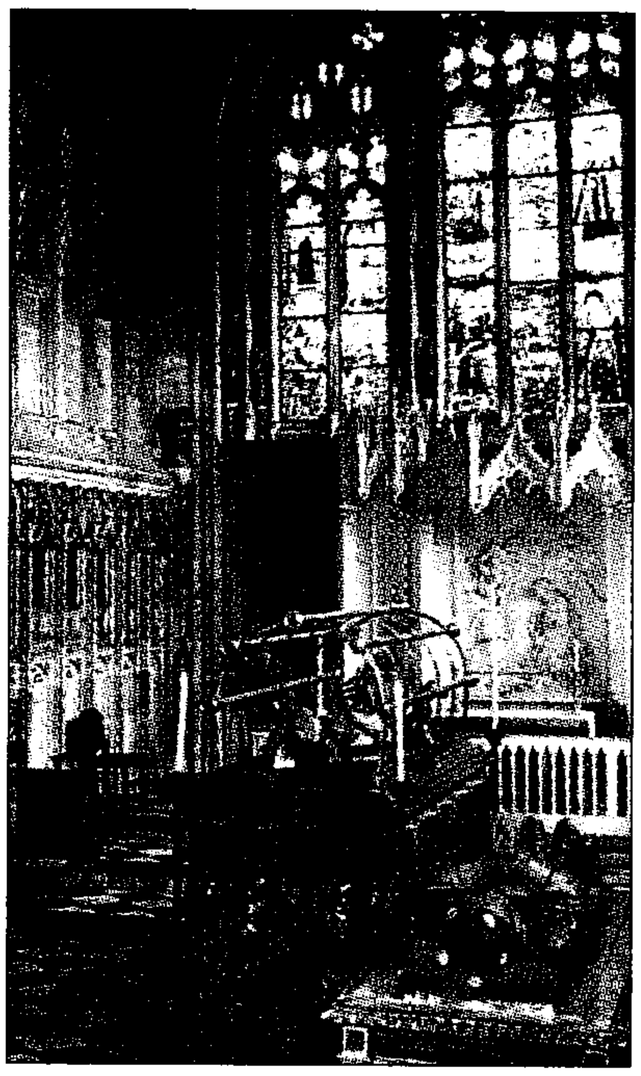
IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


GETTING JEZ AND QUIN TO DO THE ENTERTAINMENT AT LOTTE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY HAS BEEN A DISASTER!
HAPPY BIRTHDAY LOTTE
THEY JUST CAN'T SEEM TO GET ON THE CHILDREN'S WAVELENGTH AT ALL
LOOK, KIDDIES, HERE'S THE NEW ART PAVILION AT STUTTGART
AND HERE'S SHOSTAKOVICH ON A BAD HAIR DAY!

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE tomb of Richard de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, is one of the most glorious creations of English medieval art. A gilt brass effigy of the earl lies, with his long thin hands raised and apart, as if about to pray, and with a griffin and bear at his feet, under a strange hooped wagon roof of copper gilt, the whole lying on a magnificent tomb chest of Purbeck marble elaborated with figures of mourners.



Beauchamp — "a brave and chivalrous warrior" and a close friend of Henry V — died at Rouen in 1439, and this astonishing, beautiful tomb was made in about 1448-53. Of course it is a frightful bore that you have to leave London and travel to Warwick to see it, for it sits in the centre of the Beauchamp Chapel, an amazing, inventive Perpendicular structure added to St Mary's parish church as Beauchamp's will directed.

The chapel was begun in 1443 and consecrated in 1475, and the Earl's tomb, surrounded by other, later monuments in this rich Gothic setting and seen from the steps down from the south transept, is a breathtaking sight. In other words, the Beauchamp tomb is the centrepiece and an integral part of a total late medieval work of art.

This has not deterred the Victoria & Albert Museum from asking to take the effigy off its base and out of its setting to borrow it for the exhibition, Gothic: Art for England 1400-1547, in London in October. You can't blame them for trying; but what is extraordinary is that the church authorities ever agreed to lend it. St Mary's, and Warwick, will be without its treasure for months. More to the point, it will be difficult and expensive to get the object out of the chapel without damaging it or its neighbours or the architecture.

Then this very heavy and precious object will have to be transported to London, installed in the exhibition, and then dismantled again and returned, so the risk of further injury is high.

The former rector of St Mary's, Canon David Brindley, agreed to lend the tomb to the V&A three years ago, but only in March was the Coventry diocesan advisory committee asked to rubber-stamp the application.

It is curious that in an age of virtual reality it is thought necessary to borrow a large, heavy, ancient, delicate and precious national treasure for an ephemeral exhibition. A computer reconstruction of the tomb – in its intended and crucial setting – would surely be adequate and encourage visitors to travel the mere 80 odd miles to Warwick to see the real thing.

The case has wider implications. "This is one of the most important medieval artefacts in the country, and it's good to share these things," says Dr Brown. But is it? If it is good to send Richard Beauchamp to London, why not send, say, the tomb of Henry V in Westminster Abbey to Warwick? Or the tomb of Nelson to Liverpool? Or the statue of Charles I at Charing Cross to Penzance?

If great works of art are worth preserving, no unnecessary risk should be taken with them. (Canova's *Three Graces*, for example, jointly owned by the V&A and the National Galleries of Scotland, have already sustained hairline cracks being shuttled between London and Edinburgh.)

Richard Beauchamp's glorious tomb should stay where it has been for the last five and a half centuries. Sir William Gage, chancellor of Coventry diocese, has yet to make a final decision. Let us hope he thinks carefully about his responsibilities to posterity.

IT'S becoming a habit: last week Sir Michael Hopkins won an award in the Royal Fine Art Commission Trust "Building of the Year 2003" competition. His wife and partner Patty, Lady Hopkins, was one of the awards judges.

This week the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) revealed the shortlist of schemes for its Prime Minister's Better Public Building award. On the list is the PFI refurbishment of the Treasury Building in Whitehall, a project carried out by Stanhope, the development company chaired by Sir Stuart Lipton. The shortlist was announced at the Treasury building by the chairman of CABE... Sir Stuart Lipton.

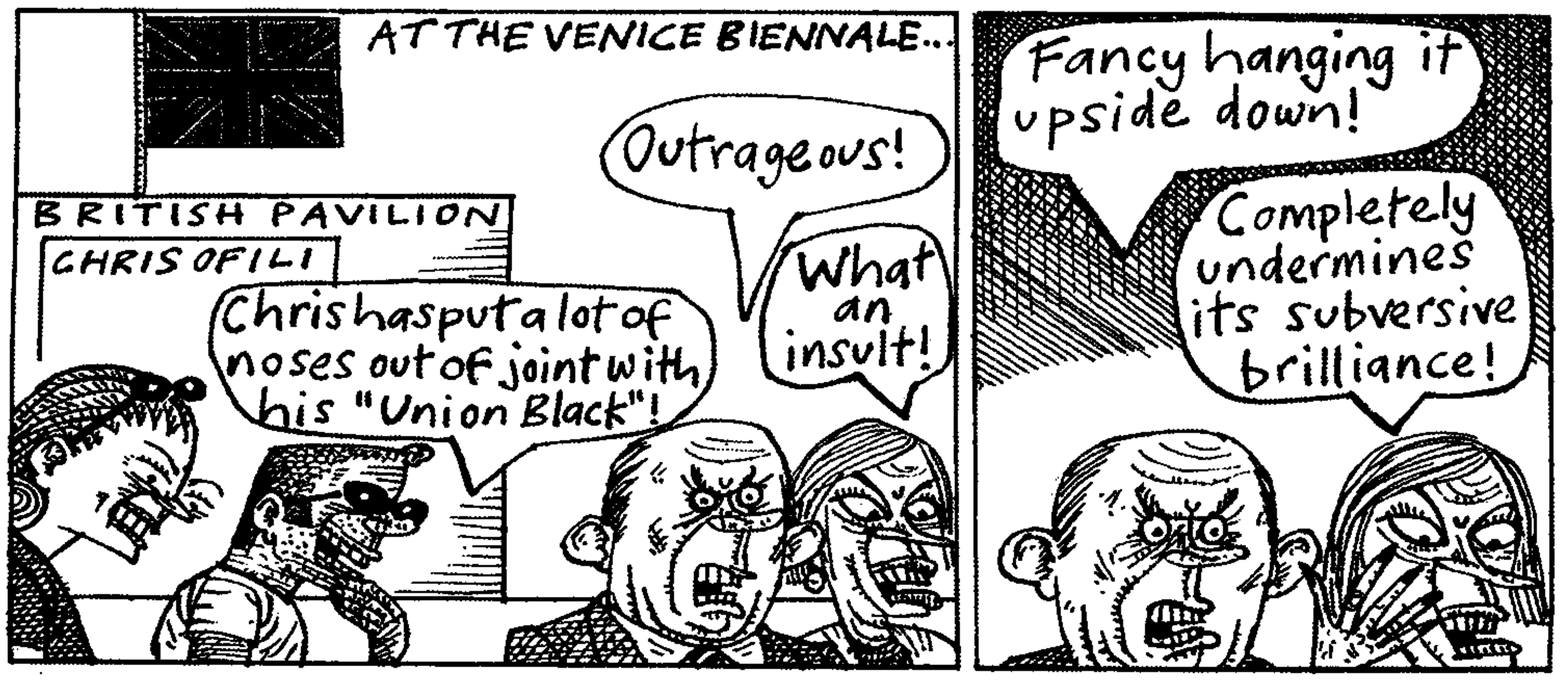
And of course the fact that Eric Parry chairs the RIBA Awards Group did not prevent one of his buildings becoming an RIBA winner this week...

Trebles all round... or is it the Sick Bag?

'Piloti'

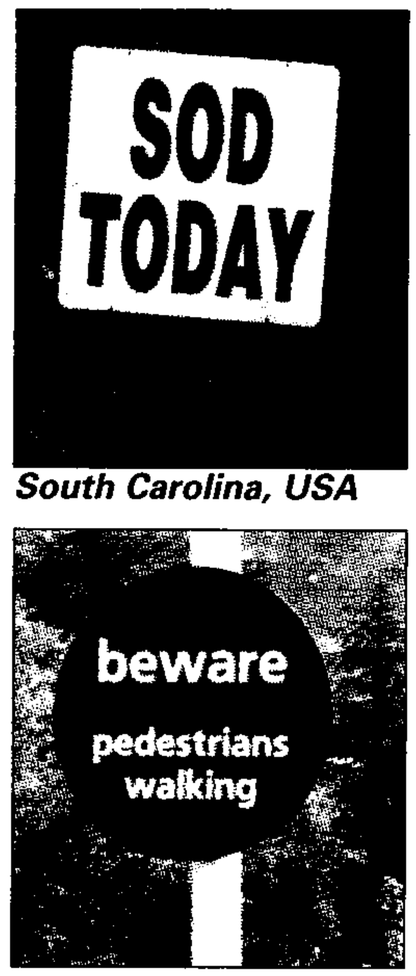
YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


AT THE VENICE BIENNALE...
BRITISH PAVILION
CHRIS OFILI
Chris has put a lot of noses out of joint with his "Union Black"!
Outrageous!
What an insult!
Fancy hanging it upside down!
Completely undermines its subversive brilliance!

I-SPY

Germany



South Carolina, USA

Isle of Skye

Submitted by Nick Morgan, Angie Neal and Michael R. Taylor. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs.)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

IT'S interesting to note how often singers in the calm, pacific, Classic FM world of easy-listening get themselves embroiled in anything but calm, pacific battles with their management.

Only a cynic would suggest there might be some connection here with the way easy-listening turns into easy-money, and this column is suggesting no such thing. Perish the thought. But time and again it happens.

Not so long ago the lovely Charlotte *Voice of an Angel* Church stepped down from her cloud for a particularly nasty scrap with the kind gentleman who, little thinking of himself or personal reward, launched her career. And now Russell Watson is having similar problems with the two Manchester businessmen who rescued him from a life of bolt-cutting (his pre-musical profession) some five years ago.

According to Messrs Ian Boasman and Keith Chadwick, Watson owes them his celebrity. Apparently they heard him doing talent spots in Manchester, formed a company to manage him, paid him a salary and found him a recording contract – only to be cast aside when Watson made it to the big time.

According to Watson he owes them nothing of the sort. And it's certainly true that the management deal in question wasn't, by the standards of these things, generous. They paid him £3,000 a month, which doesn't look like a long-term agreement for a burgeoning star on the brink of millions.

Oh, but then there were the perks, Boasman and Chadwick say. In expectation of that big time they provided him with use of an Audi A4 car, membership of the local gym, and money to have his teeth fixed. After which there was clearly no looking back.

Such largesse, they say, entitles them to 51 percent of his not inconsiderable earnings; and they're suing for it, represented by a firm of solicitors with the painful-sounding name Wacks Caller (who no doubt give defendants the choice of bending over when they can't pay up). But when the case comes for trial later this year, it will at least raise one question we'd all dearly like to know. Why is it that amid the thorough preparations for young warbler Watson's stardom, it occurred to no one in his management to buy him singing lessons?

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

AD NAUSEAM

A MONTH ago, advertising agency Lowe's announced that it was setting up a cable TV channel to show only commercials. "It opens the door to a whole range of possibilities such as five-minute blockbusters, precision targeting and financially incentivised advertising viewing," said Guy Lambert, an account planner at Lowe's.

Then, a fortnight later on 13 June, agency BBH declared that it was creating a department to make TV programmes. John O'Keefe, its creative director, said: "Any agency worth its salt should be making a life for itself outside the 60-second TV ad. Savvy clients know that they need to exist in the space around ads." In other words, we are all fed up with adverts so adverts will now start infecting television itself.

Of course ITC rules exist precisely to stop such insidious manoeuvres. Indeed, on the very same day, the ITC said it was to investigate *Dinner Doctors*, a Channel Five show funded by Heinz. It was created by Spring London, an arm of the advertising agency Leo Burnett. The show teaches troubled mums how to make easy meals from convenient foods like beans with a dash of ketchup and a salad cream chaser.

All three of these represent adland's cock-eyed response to the menace of the Tivo, a personal video recorder that can filter out adverts. Ad Nauseam looked at this brushed-steel nemesis nearly three years ago in *Eye* 1013. The only miracle is that it hasn't caught on more quickly, but with the advent of Sky+, which also uses the technology, ad-free nirvana will be with us shortly.

Meanwhile the BBC, which does not need advertisements, continues to pour cash into glossy and pointless ads aimed at persuading BBC1 viewers that it might be a good idea to, er, watch BBC1.

Last month advertising agency Abbot Mead Vickers was recruited at great expense to come up with "Cliffhanger", a 90-second film set in medieval times which showed a terrified child watching as her screaming mother was pushed over a cliff to her death, accompanied by the strapline "Everyone likes to watch".

Christine Madden, BBC1's head of marketing, explained that "we've moved our strategy on... We aim to engage our viewers with this spectacular film in a way that is as involving as our programmes." And engage they certainly did, with hundreds phoning to complain about the trail's heartless cruelty and its inappropriateness for showing during the early evening. The ad was shelved after being shown three times.

Meanwhile this month sees the launch of more harmless fare: a series of shots of bare feet on beaches and lawns which aims to get viewers excited about summertime (rather than going outside and actually experiencing it). Naturally this was not a simple case of pointing a camera at the floor. Instead, ad agency Fallon, charged to come up with a "television and poster creative", flew an entire crew out to Barcelona where the BBC put them up for several days while they filmed a group of specially-cast Spanish feet.

It appears that Halifax, winner of last year's prestigious Blunt Pencil award for the most irritating ad, is rubbing people up the wrong way again.

This time its direct marketing arm is to blame: holders of the bank's Platinum Visa Card have recently been sent missives in envelopes branded with their catchphrase, "Always Giving You Extra".

Alas, in this case the "Extra" they give you consists of having cashback payable on purchases halved and the interest-free credit period for paying bills reduced by six days. As an irate reader asked: "Is Howard aware of this irony or is he too busy flying around our television screens on his giant white swan to have noticed?"

Letters

Private Eye

Fictional source

Sir,

This may have already been brought to your attention, but I think I can identify the Mail's "intelligence sources" responsible for the Iraqi ebola factory story. His name is Tom Clancy. The ebola factory (and plot to release it at an American motor show) is straight out of EXECUTIVE ORDERS in his Jack Ryan series.

MEL RICHARDS,

Via email.

Calm down, calm down

Sir,

Liverpool may or may not be the most cultured place in Europe, but it is apparent by the cartoon in Eye 1082 that it some time since anyone in your office has been here.

I would feel far more at threat of encountering the aggression depicted if I was down in London I can assure you.

Come on, lads, you can do better.

EYE SUBSCRIBER,

Liverpool.

LUVVIES

Until very recently I just couldn't wear wool. Eugh. But then somebody said to me, Jeff, there are some cashmere garments that would really add to your life. Don't just block them out. So I gave them a chance and I've been very much enjoying them ever since.

JEFF GOLDBLUM
Sunday Telegraph

Submitted by J. James.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Baffled Boffin

Sir,

I would just like to point out to Boffin (Eye 1082) that Cassandra always foretold events accurately, but was cursed not to be believed – the punishment for upsetting some God or other along the way.

He might want perhaps to bear Jeremiah in mind for the future, when needing an example of an extreme pessimist.

I will try to get out more.

YVONNE RIXON,

Via email.

Crude tactics

Sir,

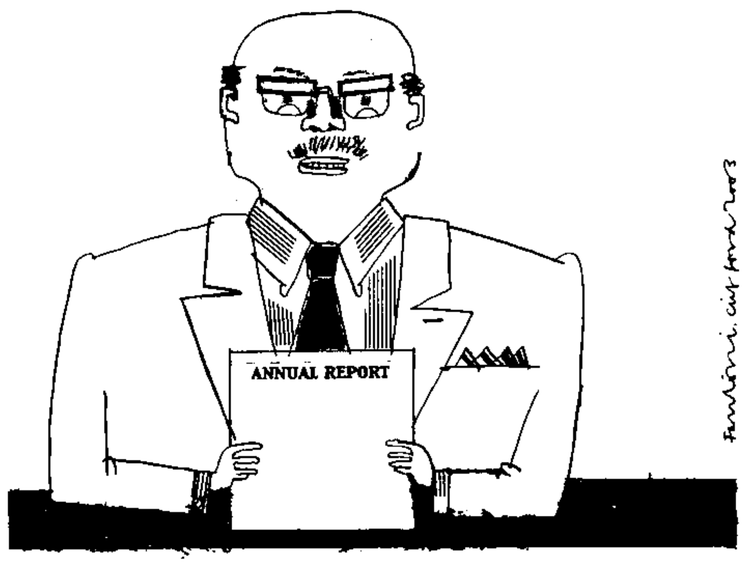
So there is a vast 20 billion [barrel] oilfield up for grabs in the North Sea, eh! I think you will find that it comprises hundreds of small fields, that Gordon the Thief Controller would like the oil industry to develop.

His main problem is that BP, among other giants, is selling up and leaving the small pickings in the North Sea to the "Bottom Feeders". We all remember when Gordon, when new to office at No 11, tried a smash & grab raid on the oil industry and the PRT tax back in 1998. By 1999 many were out of work as the industry went elsewhere. And now with NS oil production on the ramp-down, where is this government going to get its quick fix of cash?

ANON,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See



"The disastrous results are due to management decisions, for which I take full responsibility"

Heel thyself?

Sir,

I read your portrait of the excellent podiatric services enjoyed by diabetics with some wry amusement. I have been insulin dependent for 15 years and every year the NHS provision gets worse and worse. There has been a fairly spectacular decline over the last two years. I developed diabetic neuropathy in my right foot in September of last year. This condition causes me chronic pain on a nightly basis and keeps me awake for hours at a time. By the start of my shift the following day I am generally shattered. Have I access to podiatry "whether I need it or not"?

Have I buggery.

I currently visit my GP about twice a month. These visits are usually on an emergency basis as after several nights of pain and insomnia I cannot wait two weeks for an appointment. These visits last around 3/4 minutes and result only in my being told to increase the medication. The only effect the medication ever has is to make me more and more soporific and confused. It has no effect at all on the pain. During one visit I watched a stream of emergency patients streaming in and out of the surgery with an average consultation time of around 5/6 minutes. If you wonder where all the extra money being pumped into the NHS is going I suggest you look at the GPs' bank accounts. It certainly isn't going on services.

Regards,
MARK CAESADLER,

Via email.

Yard stick

Sir,

You naughty worm, had you called Laurie or I, through a skunk haze we would have told you there was no grassing up of your hero hack, Graeme McLagan (Literary Review, 1082).

Last year we wrote asking Graeme for an interview about his close relationship with the Yard, built up over 30 years at the BBC. He refused, and complained about us in writing and by phone to our publisher. Only then did we reply to his, Piatkus books, again seeking an interview.

The decision by Alan Rusbridger to extract the best bits of Graeme's hard hitting exposé, no doubt after a furious bidding war, only confirms why we were right to leave the Yardian – as if a veteran investigative hack like Graeme, so glowingly endorsed by the Met Commissioner and his deputy, couldn't work that out.

PS: Our book is actually called "Untouchables – corruption, cover up and racism in Scotland Yard." We do not expect an endorsement from Sir John Stevens on the jacket.

PPS: Come on Graeme, give us an interview.

Regards,
MICHAEL GILLARD & LAURIE FLYNN,

London.

Hacked off

Sir,

David Henshaw attempted to rubbish our award-winning story of Zarmina, the woman executed by the Taliban, Letters page (Eye 1082).

Could this be the same David Henshaw of Hardcash Productions who phoned the Daily Mirror to congratulate us on 19 June 2002, the day our article appeared? The same Mr Henshaw whose letter appealing for funds from Mirror readers to help build and run a school in Afghanistan was published in our Letters page two days later?

And what of his co-signatory Carla Garapedian? Is this the same Carla who relied on our information, given for nothing, to locate and interview the dead woman's five youngest children, her brother-in-law and her eldest, married daughter? Had we been residents of your Street of Shame, would we have happily sent this TV team to the heart of the story?

In fact, if we had not given our help, numerously requested by Channel 4, Hardcash would not have had their documentary. We repeat, the photograph we published was confirmed to be of Zarmina by Rana Saeed, the woman police officer in the case, Zarmina's brother-in-law Marzak, her sister-in-law, her eldest daughter, her two brothers, the female prison warden who befriended Zarmina, not to mention police major Abdul Haq, joint-charge of the investigation. We showed each of them the picture. They had no reason to lie. Hardcash says it received confirmation from Zarmina's younger children "Hiwad, age 13 and Bibi, age 11." Sorry, they are 12 and 8 and their mother was executed three years earlier when they were 9 and 5 years old. Some confirmation, Hardcash. Some sensitivity.

The same sensitivity exhibited when Hardcash interviewed Zarmina's second-eldest daughter and then broke the news to her, on camera, that her mother had been killed. Roll, cameras. Record the shock. What a scoop! "We should point out that no cash was offered to anyone," your correspondents add. They omit to say that Zarmina's relatives certainly expected some and gave the interview to Hardcash on that understanding. Instead, once the interview was filmed, the team dispensed some children's clothes, much to the adults' disgust. We refer again to Henshaw's published letter in the Daily Mirror appealing for funds in which he writes "we may never find out what has happened to Zarmina's children...that shouldn't stop us trying to do something positive and effective for the other children of Afghanistan." Well, David, we led you to the orphans. Why then did you not give them something more "positive and effective" than pyjamas? Next, Carla and Henshaw claim "we alerted Anton" about the disputed photo last October. They did not. We know this. So do they. Finally they claim the original article and picture is no longer available on the Mirror website. Untrue.

Yours sincerely,
ANTON ANTONOWICZ &
PHIL SPENCER,

The Daily Mirror.

Miles out

Sir,

Your report (Eye 1082) concerning the purchase of the Oxford Radcliffe Infirmary site by the University of Oxford may or may not be completely true save in one respect. If the new PFI site you refer to really is going to be developed in Headingley (and not Headington), as you say, then let's hope that Mr Prescott's joined-up transport policy is revived and working as we'll need it.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD BELL,

Oxford.

DYSLEXIA TREATMEN CENTRE

Advertisement, Glasgow Metro

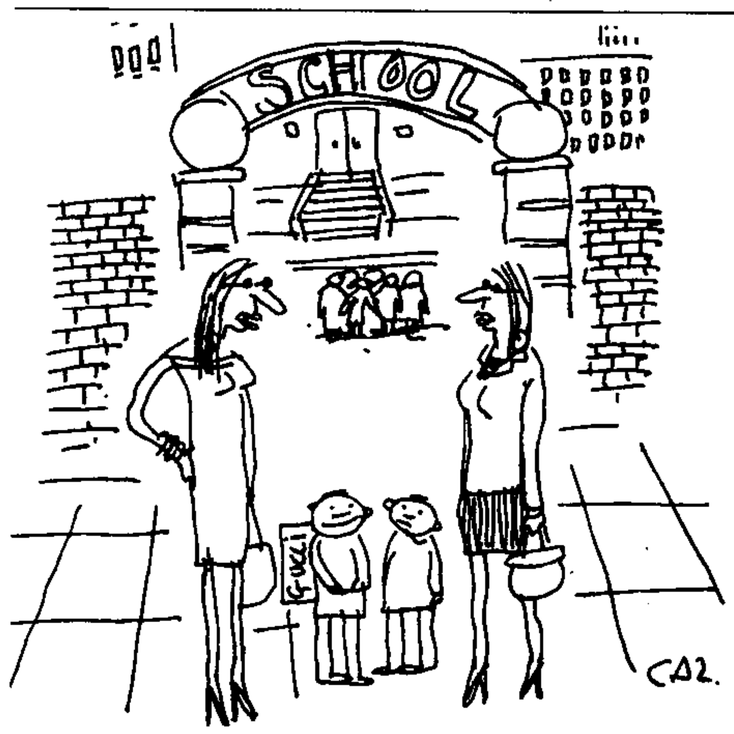
Narrow definition

Sir,

Now well into my first year as a subscriber to your esteemed publication, I was appalled this morning to hear Knife and Packer (1082) talking about "narrowboating on the Norfolk broads". As any fule kno, the broads are populated by motor cruisers which are generally twice the width of narrowboats, the latter tending to stick to the canals.

Yours in pedantry,
OWEN LLOYD (university student avoiding revision),

Via email.



"Who designed yours?"

House work

Sir,

Re: Eye 1082 "How clean is your house?" cartoon. I wasn't aware that I'm a Celebrity... was on Channel 4. Proper research would have found it on ITV. Fair point though: Channel 4 is full of crap.

Yours in hope,
PETER McGUIGAN,

Co. Armagh, NI.

Yours Faith fully

Sir,

There are a great many errors in your story about the inquiry into the former Lambeth Community Alarms Service (1082), but the most serious aspect of the story is the inference that Lambeth council's chief executive Faith Boardman used a highly derogatory term for black people. Your use of this word in quotation marks, following an inaccurate report of her testimony to the inquiry creates the impression she said something that she did not say.

The assertion that Ms Boardman has tried to prevent a witness from giving evidence is also completely without foundation. The original timetable for the inquiry was agreed by all parties, including Mr Owolade and his representative from the "Movement for Justice", in the knowledge that this would mean he would have to give evidence before his employment tribunal hearing took place.

Yours sincerely,
CLLR PETER TRUESDALE,

Leader, Lambeth Council.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Greg Chappell instructed his brother Trevor to bowl the last ball underground..."
RICHARD KAUFMANN, Talksport Radio
(M Todd)

Sky Andrew (football agent) talking about transfer of David Beckham:
"He's one of the greatest players in the world, if not one of the greatest anywhere."
CHANNEL 4 NEWS
(Robert Rooney)

"People need to be taught how to put a condom on...these are things that have to be taught and they have to be rammed home quite hard..."
FI GLOVER, Radio 5 Live
(Glyn Berrington)

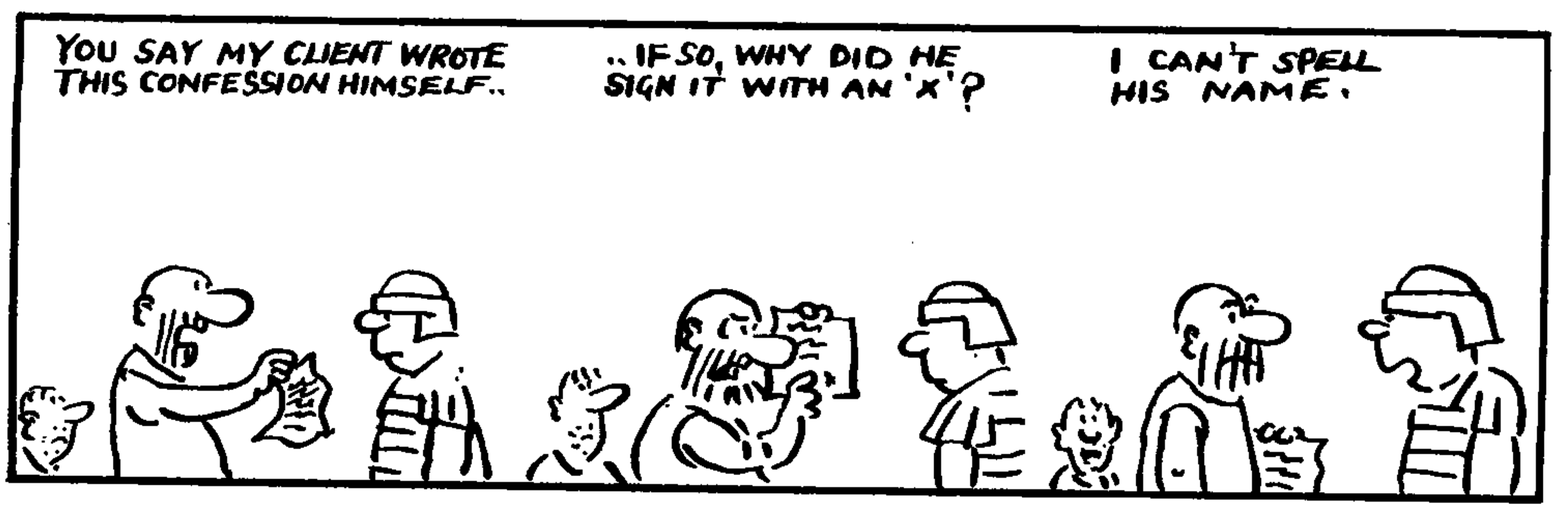
"He went down like a pack of cards."
CHRIS KAMARA, Sky Sports
(Joseph Clapton-Brewer)

"We're about to splice the mainbrace on Classic FM because we're going sailing with Katchaturian and Spartacus."
CLASSIC FM
(Diane Fairhill)

Knifeman has sentence cut

Redditch Advertiser

HOM SAP AUSTIN



Letter from **Khartoum**

from Our Own Correspondent

ANY parliamentary investigation in Britain into your government's claim that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction should examine the last time Tony Blair said he had "compelling evidence" of chemical weapons production.

That was in August 1998 when he supported Bill Clinton's cruise missile attack on the El Shifa pharmaceutical plant here in Sudan, saying there was "compelling evidence" of chemical/biological warfare (CBW) production in Khartoum.

Our minister for animal resources, Joseph Malwal, was in London at the time and said your ambassador, Alan Goulty, was being expelled because Khartoum was furious with Britain's support for Washington's action. Mr Malwal was then El Shifa's largest client, buying huge stocks of the tick powder manufactured there – apparently out of the compound empta (*O*-ethylmethylphosphonothioic acid). An undercover team of CIA "sniffers" had revealed its presence and said it could only be used as a precursor to make VX nerve gas.

At the time our 1998 famine was at its height; and Britain was attempting to negotiate a "corridors of tranquillity" ceasefire to allow delivery of humanitarian aid. Twenty years of war had seen us create the world's largest number of displaced people (more than five million) dependent on the largest humanitarian airlift in history and several million war-related deaths.

The subsequent collapse of the ceasefire led to untold additional famine deaths; and the destruction of the only domestic supply of anti-malarials further added to the hidden death-toll. Mr Blair has never produced any evidence other than the CIA's (now largely-discredited) claims about empta; and no one seems to believe that we now have a WMD programme, despite our previous close military ties to Iraq and Osama bin Laden.

Britain has been mending fences and in February last year Alan Goulty was appointed as your special representative for peace in Sudan. Britain, the US and Norway have also been pushing a regional peace initiative that has now produced a temporary ceasefire – and the accusations of chemical weapons seem to have been quietly forgotten. Nevertheless, your FCO still insists Washington's "compelling evidence" was valid "and that remains our position now".

Today we are regarded as less of a terrorist threat than Kenya, but remain on the US list of state sponsors of terrorism. But for how much longer?

In May our authorities arrested 17 Saudis in a secret terrorist training camp in the Nuba Mountains (on the side controlled by the government, not the rebels). Khartoum has long been accused of widespread ethnic cleansing in the Nuba mountains, an area until recently closed to the outside world. In 1992 it launched a jihad to clear the area of rebel "apostates" and there is widespread scepticism that Khartoum has severed all links with radical Islamist groups.

The place the Saudis were arrested is close to the main military garrison in the region – a demilitarised area that is supposed to be heavily monitored by international observers from the joint military commission (JMC) ceasefire team. It is still impossible to get near the area without authorisation from Khartoum military intelligence. Opposition sources have long said the area was secretly being used by al Qaeda and the regime has been deceiving the US by giving up a few names to maintain its policy of "appeasement".

Interestingly the arrests came a day after our foreign minister returned from meeting Colin Powell in Washington where he was told we would have to take specific measures before we could be removed from the US terror list. Perhaps the lack of compelling evidence for an attack against an alleged CBW facility led us to look the other way, allowing radical Islamist groups to continue operating within Sudan; or perhaps there really was evidence of WMDs in the hands of a regime tied to Saddam and Bin Laden – in which case we really should be told.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "Puttanopoly is a board game based on Monopoly," Daniela Mannu explained to onlookers at the Furlan Gallery in the Italian town of Pordenone, "and up to eight players can take part. It's fun to play, and educational too. Because instead of simply buying property, players find out what it's like to be an immigrant prostitute, enslaved by the Mafia and forced to work in the sex industry."

Mannu and Lucia Mainetti were demonstrating the game which they had devised together, and which is being marketed in Italy by the Committee for Prostitutes' Civil Rights. "At the start of the game, each player is given an identity card and a space on the street, but then

they're on their own. Depending on each throw of the dice, they might have to give 90% of their earnings to a pimp, escape from a serial killer, have a back street abortion, avoid a police raid, travel to a brothel in Amsterdam, be on the receiving end of pack rape, or be killed by the Mafia and end up dead in a river, all while trying to earn enough money to survive. The idea is to give people an idea of what prostitutes are up against in this country, but it's not all gloom. The winner is the player who manages to find the love of their life, gets married, and leaves the streets forever. It's exciting, it's educational, it's Puttanopoly." *(Noticias locas, 21/3/03. Spotter: Bob Heys.)*

— ● —

● *"It wasn't the most successful disguise he could have chosen," a police spokesman told reporters in Nagoya, "because few grown men can convincingly pass themselves off as schoolgirls. The five o'clock shadow was a giveaway when you got up close, as were the hairy legs visible beneath his skirt. And even from a distance, you could tell there was something wrong, because he's 175 centimetres high, which would be astonishingly tall even for a grown woman in Japan, let alone a schoolgirl."*

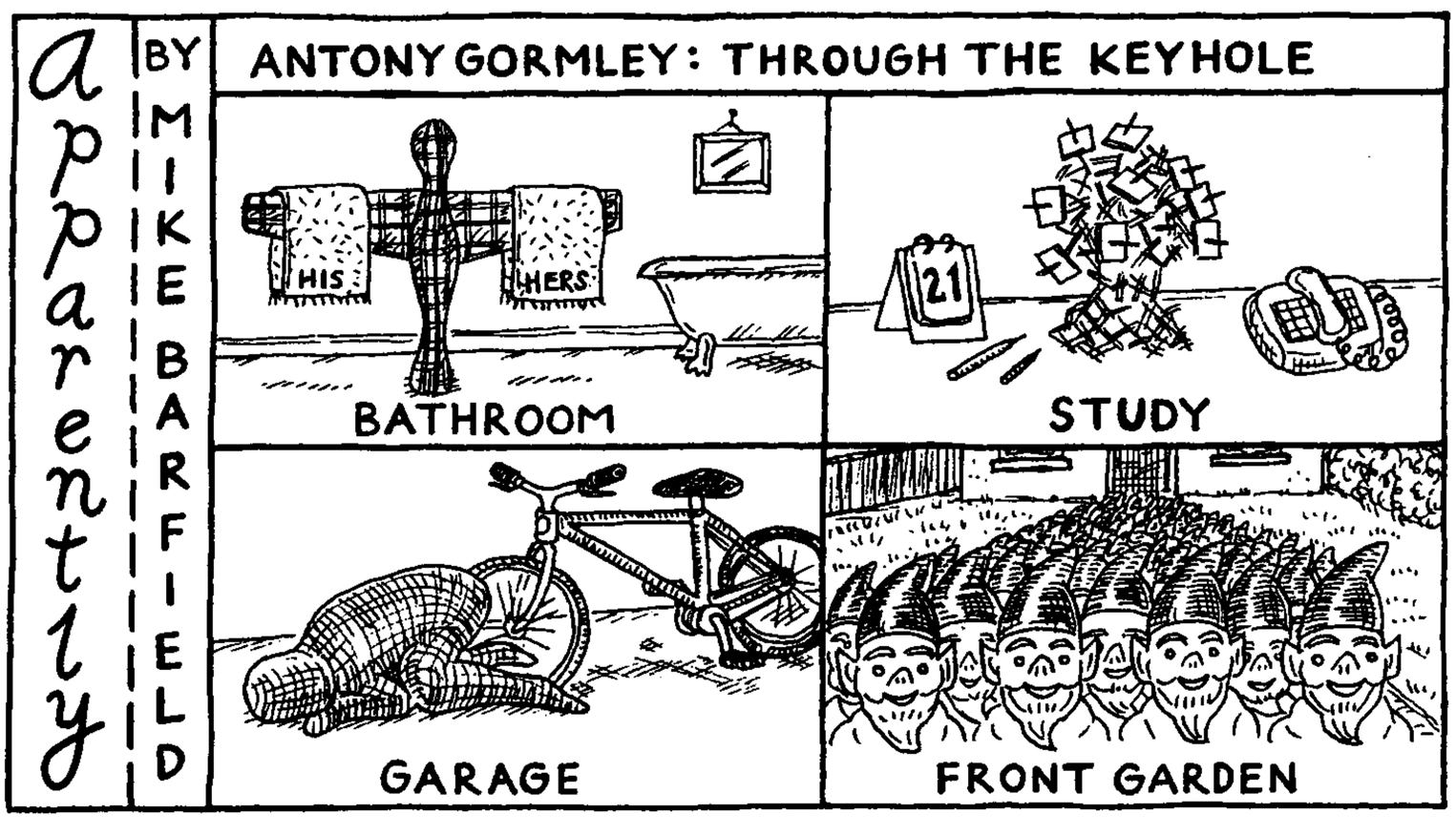
The spokesman was commenting on the arrest of Yoshifumi Moriwaki, a twenty-four-year-old Nagoya man who later admitted responsibility for a string of smash-and-grab robberies in the city during the past three months. "We finally caught him at a railway station, after he'd snatched a handbag from a woman cyclist, and he was wearing his usual outfit of blue skirt, grey blouse, painted on freckles, and a chestnut wig with plaits. During questioning, we asked him why he dressed up as a schoolgirl when he robbed people, and got an interesting answer. He told us that he knew the disguise was ludicrously unconvincing, but he believed people would only remember the clothes, and not him. And it's true that although he robbed dozens of people, none of his victims could describe him accurately, except to say that he was a tall hairy man dressed up as a schoolgirl. So in a bizarre way, his disguise was quite effective." (Mainichi Shimbun, 16/5/03. Spotter: Oliver Reed.)

— ● —

● "People have got used to the idea that 'Botox parties' are safe," Dr Tim Johnson of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons told reporters in Fort Lauderdale, "and they think that silicone 'pumping parties' will be much the same. But unlike Botox, the effects of silicone injections don't fade with time, and they can cause bumps and unattractive swelling. Yet people seem willing to trust their bodies to any charlatan who offers breast augmentation on the cheap, even though injections with impure silicone can cause serious illness, or even death."

Dr Johnson was speaking after Mark Hawkins had been found guilty in a Florida court of the third-degree murder of Vera Lawrence, a fifty-three-year-old Miami secretary. Commenting on the case, a prosecution spokesman noted that "Hawkins advertised and ran 'pumping parties' together with his associate, a transvestite called Donnie Hendrix, also known as Viva. Neither had any medical training, but they bought silicone intended for use as a cleaning product for $8 a gallon, and charged up to $300 for each injection into the breasts or buttocks. On the night Ms Lawrence died, she attended one of these parties and received dozens of silicone injections into her hips and buttocks, a total of about twenty pints. She then became breathless and unable to speak, and was declared dead shortly after arrival at Memorial West Regional Hospital.

"Pumping parties are popular nowadays with transgender and transvestite people, especially those who take part in beauty pageants and want a quick and cheap way of enhancing their bodies. But industrial-grade silicone is a poison, and people should be aware that if it enters their blood stream and reaches their lungs, they will die." *(Orlando Sentinel, 27/5/03. Spotter: Nicholas Hamlyn.)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

Hey, look, I'm a pretty easy-going kind of guy, as you all know! But, frankly, the way some of you have reacted to my streamlining of the PCC has nearly made me want to give the whole thing up. (Not quite: Gordon, don't get too excited!)

The idea that I have somehow "botched" my long-overdue reorganisation of the antiquated and outmoded PCC structure is, frankly, ridiculous.

For a start, I didn't just think it all up on the spur of the moment. I've been planning it for months in between all the other things I've had on my plate (in case you hadn't noticed!). Such as all the days and nights I've had to put into our crusade to rid the world of the Evil One, alongside my good friend the Rev. Dubya of the Church of Latter-day Morbombs!

And let us not forget that our crusade was 100 percent successful, whatever you may hear from the whingeing and deranged Mrs Short or the bitter, bearded lothario Mr Cook (no offence to either of these much-respected former members of the PCC!).

And, frankly, if it hadn't been for the somewhat selfish behaviour of one member of the PCC (no names, but Mr Milburn knows who I'm talking about!), we would have none of this talk of "botching".

Just when I'd sorted out all the new parish rotas with the aid of Mr Birt, who came up with a very interesting flow chart showing how all the PCC members could do several jobs at once, thus saving us time and money, in came the person who I shan't name, to say that he wanted to resign so that he could see more of his family.

Well, honestly, we'd all like to spend more time with our families, wouldn't we? But there is important work to be done. As I said to Alan, "Life isn't all taking kids on the school run and playing football in the park!"

What kind of parish would we have if everyone just selfishly bunked off home, claiming that they had more important things to do than looking after the cottage hospital and finding new ways to show everybody that the waiting lists are coming down? I don't want to use the word "betrayal", Alan, but I think you know what I'm getting at!

Anyway, it didn't make the slightest difference to me, your walking out in that unforgiveable way, and it was only a matter of minutes before Mr Birt had used his computer to come up with a new flow-chart showing which jobs everyone would

now have to do.

For a start, Mr Reid has very kindly agreed to step in at short notice to take over the hospital job, even though, as he is the first to admit, he knows nothing about it!

And the same is true of Mrs Morris, who nobly agreed to come back into the PCC to organise our annual art exhibition in the church hall. Estelle is also the first to admit that she knows nothing about the arts – but isn't it often best in this life to start with a blank sheet of paper and then see what ideas turn up?

The most important quality Mr Reid and Mrs Morris both share is that they are 100 percent loyal to the vicar – which brings me to the painful subject of Mr Lairg, our former legal adviser, who has had to stand down after I told him that we needed his office for storage space.

I want to emphasise that there was absolutely no disagreement between us, as some people have suggested. It was simply that I saw no useful role for someone as old-fashioned and out-of-date as Mr Lairg in a modern parish, which certainly doesn't need a legal adviser with an office full of empty whisky bottles and some ridiculously fancy wallpaper bought out of parish funds!

I am sure that my old friend Mr Falconer will do the job much better – just look at the success he made of the Millennium Tent (which, incidentally, I am delighted to say, has finally been sold to a very well-respected American business-man, Mr Dodgy, to build much-needed high-rent housing and affordable offices).

Space does not allow me to list all the other changes I have made to our parish team, but you can access the full list on the vicarage website at www.botch.gov.uk

So let's just forget about our "parish reshuffle" shall we? And move on to the one thing that really matters – the FUTURE!

I have written a special chorus for next Sunday's evensong:

"Let's all draw a great big line
Under everything that's past.
Let's keep going and we'll be fine,
The future's coming, and coming fast.
Chorus
Draw that line, draw that line
Let's all draw that line (repeat)
Words and music by T. Blair,

Yours,

Tony

Welcome to...

Mrs Hodge, who has kindly agreed to run the creche. Mrs Hodge is a very experienced childworker and had a long career in the very difficult environment of Islington, where she was responsible for a great many children, only a very small number of whom suffered at the hands of paedophiles.

Parish Postbag

Dear Sir

I would like to make it clear that I did ***not*** *resign from the PCC as the vicar said. The truth was I was sacked for objecting to the vicar's friend Mr Sainsbury's idea of Genetically Modified Radioactive Fish Flavoured Tomatoes and even worse the*

Yours sincerely
Michael Meacher
Elderflower Cottage

Dear Sir

While I do not in any way subscribe to the widely held view that the vicar's recent reorganisation of the PCC was a "botched" operation, it is regrettable that the vicar has overlooked the claims of one very experienced and fully qualified former church warden whose

Yours sincerely
P. Mandelson
Sole Proprietor of the Handy Mandy Agency ("You have a job? I want it!")

The Editor reserves the right to cut all letters for reason of space. A.C.

— HERESY WARNING —

The vicar would like to take this opportunity of reminding parishioners (and members of the PCC Mr Hain!!) that we long ago gave up believing that the rich should give away their money to the less well off. The so-called Antiblairian heresy was long ago discredited by theological experts such as the vicar and it is a pity that some people (like Mr Hain!!) still cling to these dangerous schismatic views which we must all fight against with all our might. (Got that, Mr Hain?!) *T.B.*

BRITAIN FACES NEW TERROR WARNING

by Our Man In The Bunker **Al Corena**

BRITAIN braced itself yesterday for a possible MI5 warning that could be delivered "at any minute".

Said the Head of MI5 Elizabeth Bullying-Manner "There is a group of dedicated professionals who are determined to spread terror throughout the country. These MI5 operatives could strike at any minute, possibly in the Daily Telegraph or almost certainly in the Daily Mail with a warning that Dirty Bombs may lead to a fall in house prices."

She continued, "The public must all be vigilant and tell us what is going on because we don't have a clue."

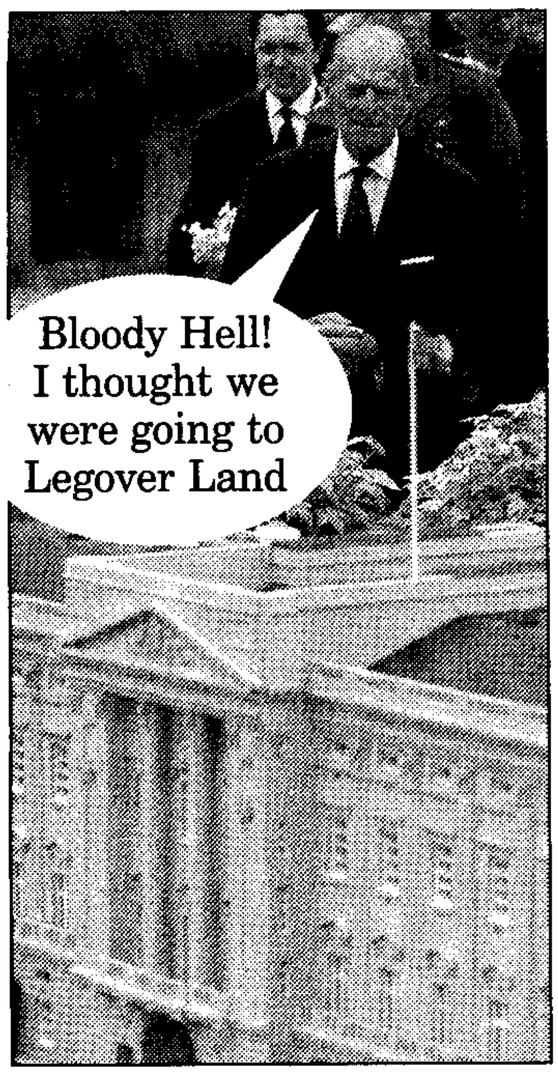
GALLOWAY – SEARCH FOR WRIT GOES ON

by Our Special Correspondent **Christopher Silvester**

THE SEARCH for the elusive WMD, Writ for Massive Damages, goes on, despite weeks in which there has been no sign whatever of the writ.

The deadly writ, which was said to be only 45 minutes away from destroying the Daily Telegraph, has hitherto failed to materialise, but top WMD expert George Galloway refused to back down.

"I am absolutely confident," he said, "that the writ will be found and will justify my going into Iraq."



The Queen accompanied by The Duke of Edinburgh and The Prince of Wales, will open the National Assembly of Wales at 12.05pm, and illafterwards attend

The Times

Daily Mail

COMMENT

What's Gone Wrong With English Sport?

THE traditional sound of the English summer – cries of despair as men weep at their sportsmen's latest defeat – has disappeared.

Instead, we have the unwelcome sound of cheering and laughter as the England teams win game after game, from Melbourne to Lords, from Cricket to Rugby.

Where did it all go wrong? Who is to blame for this summer of shame that has left a nation bewildered and confused?

But fear not. Hope is at hand to restore English sporting pride! Step forward Tim Henman, ready for his annual humiliation at the hands of Yentob Robotovich, the 7ft 3 Romanian No. 2 seed!

Come on, Tim! Show us what you can't do! And give us back our traditional English summer!

That Hain Wedding Menu In Full

Welsh Rabbit (Soaked in Rich Sauce)

– ❋ –

Squeaked Pips

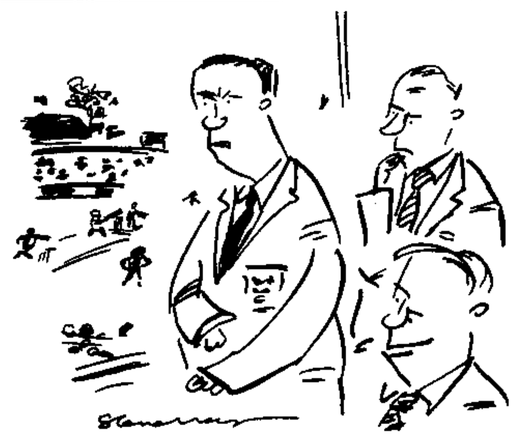
– ❋ –

TO FOLLOW

Egg on Face

– ❋ –

Hat in Ring



"Still not jazzy enough... let's try 10 overs a side..."

Thought for the Gay

(As not heard on Radio Four's Today programme)

Naughtie: And now it's Bishop O'Nanugu, Suffragan Bishop of Rumbabwe.

Bishop: Hallo Jim. What I am saying is dat we want no part in de shirtlifting crisis which are tearing the CofE apart. No disrespect to de Bishop of Oxfad but we do not want our bishops going aroun' the countryside shovin' their sexual organs into the dark hole where the sun don't shine, no sir...

Naughtie: Thank you Bishop and now the weather.

The children of the Eye's staff give their verdict of the new Harry Potter novel

Tina Slagg, 12
Harry Potter donchaluvhim?
Harry Potter arenchasickofhim?

Quentin Spart, 8
Basically a sickening endorsement of public school privilege which is utterly and totally nauseating... er... I loved it.

Emma Thribb, 17½ months
So Farewell Then
All my other books.

Charlie Filler, 3
Not nearly as good as my mother's book, *Mummy for Old Rope* available in all good bookshops (signed in his absence by P Filler).

Andrew Motion's Crap Poem (*surely "Rap", Ed*) to Celebrate the 21st Birthday of Prince William

He da Man
Who gonna be king
Respec Brova,
And all dat sort of ting.

Snoop Doggy Motion,
Poet Laureate

P.S. Can me stay on in dis job when you is da boss man?

*"You bitch... Gonna blast you with my ouzi... cause you're a motherf**kin' floozy"*

WIMBLEDON

Sex to Watch

(Surely 'Six to Watch'? Ed)

The *Eye*'s Guide to the Top Women Players

Krikey Donchaluva, 21, new blonde bombshell from the Lezch Republic. With her long legs and blonde hair, Krikey is set to go all the way to Page 3

Tina Lollita, 17, the Number One from Nabokovia is the clear favourite of the middle-aged sports editor and this may be her year to lose her temper with the photographers

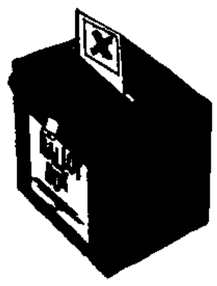
Butchia Dykova, 33, is Lesbia's top-ranking player who is set to win the hearts of no-one at all with her powerful serve, strong groundstrokes and general ability to play tennis

Britt Hopeless, 38, is the homegrown darling of the Centre Court who will go down in history as well as the first round if she keeps up her current run of bad form

Anna Rexia,5½ stone, the young challenger from Bulimia looks like going all the way to the Wimbledon hospital to be treated for an eating disorder

Somebody Williams, 26, the American-born winner will win as usual *(That's enough, Ed)*

"He's re-booting his computer"



GOVERNMENT BOWS TO REFERENDUM DEMAND

By our Political Staff **Simon Hefferendum**

THE WORLD of politics was shaken to its core when the Government announced that it would give the public a chance to vote on the most important constitutional issue of their lifetime.

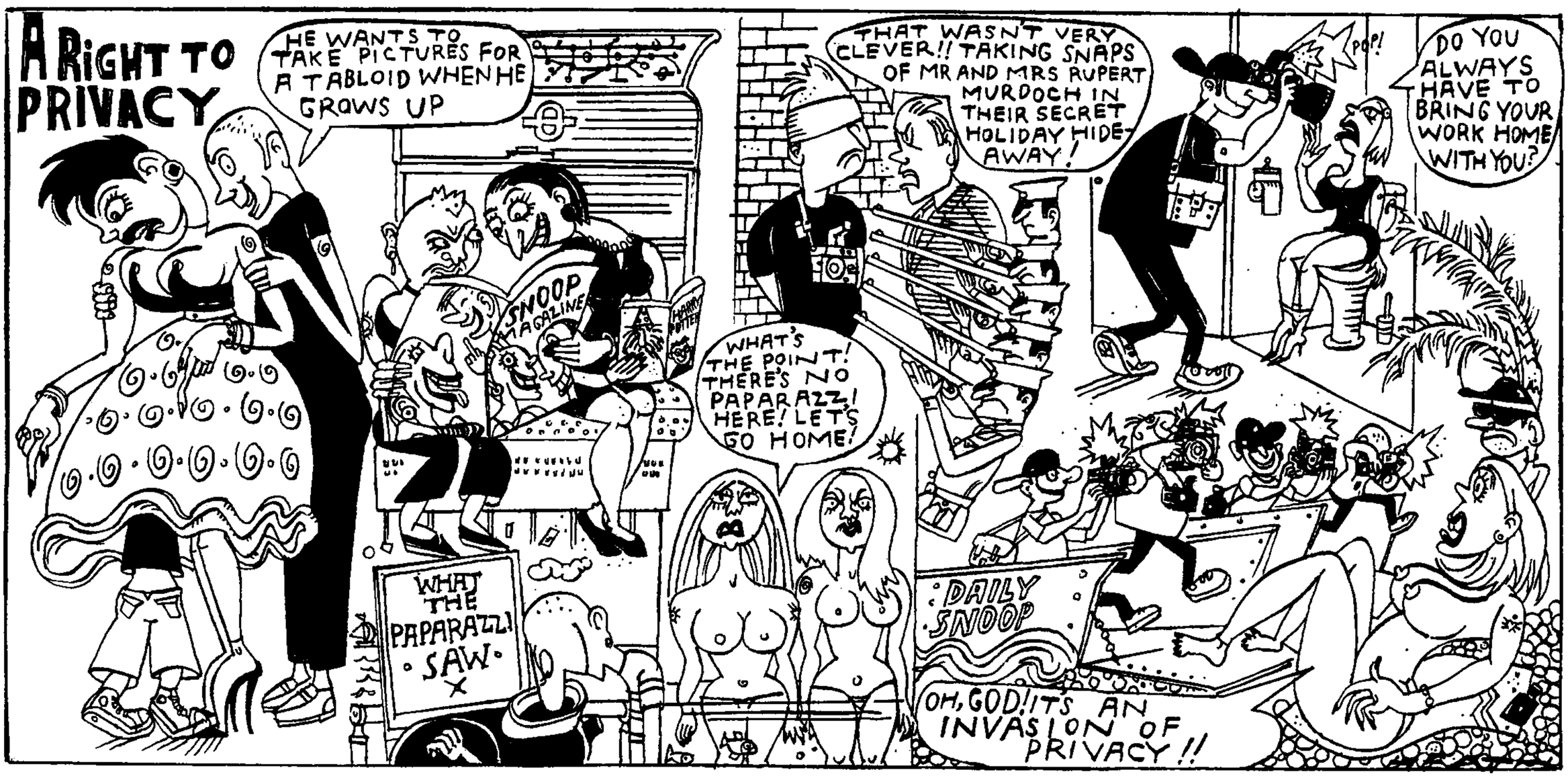
Not the Euro

Said the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, "Wherever I go people are talking about nothing else but the need for Regional Assemblies in the North of England. It's the single issue on everyone's mind and it is much more of a priority than schools, hospitals, transport or anything else."

Not true

Mr Prescott continued, "We are a listening government and what we are hearing is a constant barrage of demands for a new tier of local government".

"There is only one honest course of action open to us and that is to hold an immediate referendum on the pressing issue of avoiding talking about Europe." *(Surely 'restructuring autonomous regional administration to de-centralize zzzzzzzzzz'. Ed.)*


A RIGHT TO PRIVACY
HE WANTS TO TAKE PICTURES FOR A TABLOID WHEN HE GROWS UP
SNOOP MAGAZINE
HARRY POTTER
THAT WASN'T VERY CLEVER!! TAKING SNAPS OF MR AND MRS RUPERT MURDOCH IN THEIR SECRET HOLIDAY HIDE-AWAY!
WHAT'S THE POINT! THERE'S NO PAPARAZZ! HERE! LET'S GO HOME!
POP!
DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO BRING YOUR WORK HOME WITH YOU?
WHAT THE PAPARAZZI SAW
DAILY SNOOP
OH, GOD! IT'S AN INVASION OF PRIVACY!!

THE TEMPORA

XXVII ● VI ● MMIII

Lines Written on the Abolition of the Ancient Office of Lord Chancellor

By William Rees-McGonagall

'Twas in the year two thousand and three
That Prime Minister Tony Blair came out with a most astonishing decree.
With one stroke of the pen and a wave of his hand
He abolished the most ancient and important post in the land.

For centuries the office of Lord Chancellor had been
Second in importance only to that held by the King or Queen.
Many a famous man had held this rank in days of yore -
One thinks of Lord Hailsham and Sir Thomas More.

From the Woolsack the Chancellor presided over many a grand session
As speaker of the House of Lords, as well as head of the legal profession.
The appointment of judges was also in their power,
Even though some of those they promoted were an absolute shower.

Dressed up to the nines in their breeches and wig
Many thought that for their boots they had got too big,
Which brings me to the final holder of this post,
Whose pomposity and arrogance were accounted the most.

Lord Irvine of Lairg was this luminary's name,
Whose love of the bottle soon won him fame.
But nothing was to equal his taste in expensive wallpaper
E'en though it was the taxpayer who footed the bill for this caper.

Nor was this the only remarkable lapse in his private life
Since he had once run away with a trusted colleague's wife.
I have no wish at this stage to descend into the sewer,
But it may be recalled that this lady was Mrs Donald Dewar.

Lord Irvine owed his high position to his former pupil Tony.
Indeed many considered him to be the quintessential crony.
He considered that he had been given a job for life
Along with a huge pension for himself and his wife.

But he had not reckoned with the fickleness of his Master Blair
Whose fine words turned out as usual to be no more than hot air.
Like Beckett and More just as he'd reached the top
He was summoned to hear that he'd been given the chop.

And so, with the sacking of this one time friend,
Blair brought fourteen hundred years of history to an end.
A mighty shout of protest ran round the nation
At this shocking act of constitutional desecration.
Which was odd because when it was mentioned before
They had all agreed that Lord Irvine of Lairg was a thumping great bore.

Reshuffle Chaos as Emperor Appoints Horse as Consul

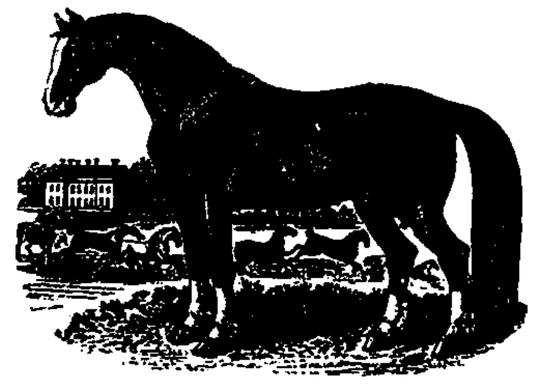
BY OUR POLITICAL STAFF **W. F. IDES**

Rome, Hodie

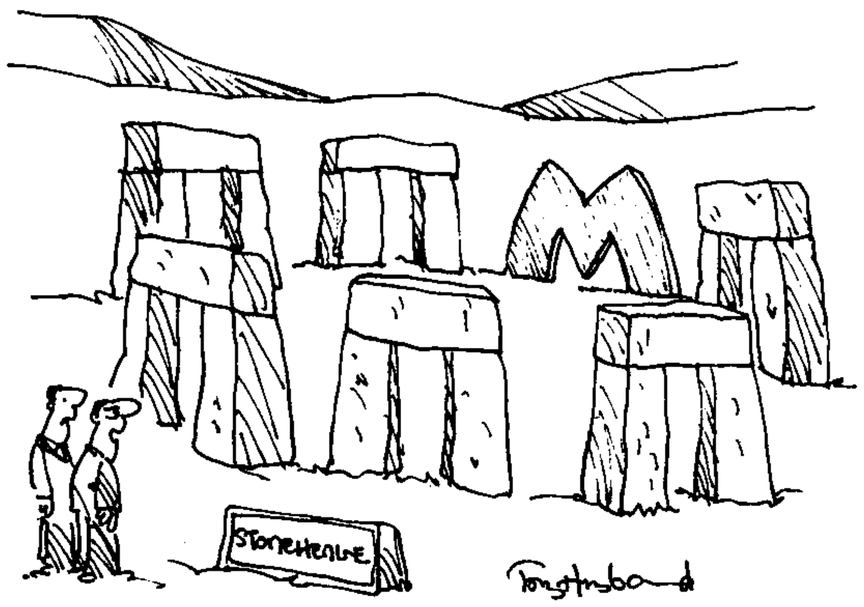
THERE was outrage in the capital today when the Emperor Blairigula changed the constitution in order to make his horse a consul.

Blairigula, however, denied that he had gone mad. "My horse," he told the senate, "is an immensely capable legislator who will be a credit to the administration. He and I go back a long way and I can count on him to create a stable government.

"I am not bonkers," the Emperor



concluded, "and to prove it I am making King Herod minister for children."



"Well it wasn't there last night!"

Those Birthday Honours in Full

Dame Anoushka of *Big Brother* for services to the Television Industry

Lord Voldemort for services to the Dark Arts

O.B.E Wan Kanobe for services to the Jedi community
(That's enough silly Honours. Ed)

the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOLEY
THE BECKHAM O.B.E. THING, WHAT A JOKE!..
HOW CAN THEY JUSTIFY GIVING HIM AN AWARD FOR HIS SERVICES TO FOOTBALL?
YEH, HE NEVER GETS INTO FIGHTS!
DOESN'T DO DRUGS, WHAT A PUFF!
YEH, I'VE NEVER EVEN SEEN HIM PISSED!

Blair To Abolish 'Oldest Post In Land'

by Our Political Staff
Christopher Howseoflords

THE WORLD of Westminster was rocked to its foundations last night when Tony Blair announced through Sky News that he was planning to abolish the ancient and respected office of the Queen.

Her Majesty was said to be "livid" that she was not consulted about her own abolition.

Mr Blair is thinking of replacing her with his oldest friend – himself.

Chancellor's Role To Be Abolished

by Our Telegraph Staff
Christopher Howsyourfather

FLEET STREET was rocked to its foundations last night by the shock news that the post of Alexander Chancellor was to be abolished after thousands of years. *(Reuters)*

Is There Life On Marr?

by Our Science Staff **P.J. Probe**

IT LOOKS like a barren, empty wilderness, broken only by the extrusion of two monstrous ears. But beneath the surface of Marr, scientists believe there could be signs of intelligent life. *(Full story p. 94)*

Those New Ministerial Posts In Full

- Secretary of State For Transport, Skills, Scotland and Fisheries **Alistair Prescott**
- Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs, Leisure, the Media and Wales **Peter Straw**
- Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Health, the Regions and Airports **Estelle Reid**
- Secretary of State for Overseas Development, Women's Affairs, Sport and Defence **John Darling**
- Secretary of State for Lifelong Learning, Sustainability, Convergence, Transparency, Europe, Grapefruit Segments and Northern Ireland **Baroness Morris**

The Alternative Rocky Horror Service Book

No. 94 A Service for the Enthronement of a Celibate Gay Bishop

President *(for it is she)*: Brethren and sisters of all genders and orientations, we are gathered here for the solemn induction of our brother _____ into the bishopric of _____ in the diocese of _____.

Before we can proceed to the ceremony you are required to answer certain questions in the presence of Almighty God and the assembled media.

Q: Do you solemnly admit that you are totally gay?

A: Indeedy, I do.

Q: And are you proud to be gay?

A. I am proud so to be.

Q: Are you in a long-established and stable relationship with your live-in same sex partner?

A. Yes, _____ and I have been in a state of co-habitation for_____ years.

Q: Are you now entirely celibate; with no physical union, one with another, in the eyes of the Lord?

A. Can I phone a friend?

Q: Do you undertake to remain in a state of Holy celibacy for as long as ye both shall live?

A. I will do my best with regard to that one.

President: I now pronounce you Bishop and celibate partner. Whom God hath joined together, may no tiresome woman set asunder.

HYMN

"The gay though gavest, Lord, is now the bishop"

THE BLESSING

New Bishop: Bless!

The congregation shall then process out to the accompaniment of Jeremiah Clarke's Trumpet Voluntary Celibacy *(no organ please!)*.

"One day, son, all this will be ours"

TV Highlights

Imagine, BBC1.
Wednesday 10.35pm

ALAN YENTOB talks to arts legend Alan Yentob about his extraordinary career and his discovery of the brilliant arts presenter Alan Yentob.

Says Yentob: "This proves I don't just make films about my mates. This one is about me."

Play-Cricket will be closing down for approximately 1 hour from 9am on Wednesday 18th June in order to repair a hardware fault. We apologise for any incontinence this may cause.

Kent Cricket League website

CHARLES IN GM STORM

By our Political Staff **GMT Vee**

THE PRINCE of Wales last night launched an astonishing personal attack on science minister Lord Sainsbury, warning him to "Keep out of politics".

Lord Sainsbury has for some time been a passionate advocate of non-organic food, and has issued apocalyptic warnings of the dangers to mankind of not growing genetically modified crops.

Off His Trolley

But Prince Charles has had enough of the interfering supermarket chief. "He is an unelected hereditary millionaire," said the Prince, "who has only got his position because of who his family is.

"He should stick to his job, going round the country talking to check-out girls and opening new supermarkets.

"He should leave politics to people who know what they're talking about, like me," said the Prince.

the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOD
SO DAVID, FOOTBALL FANS WANT TO KNOW, WHAT WILL YOUR NUMBER BE AT REAL MADRID?
"RAUL CAN WEAR No. 7 BECKS"
THAT'S EASY...
AROUND £120,000 A WEEK!

Daily Mail, Friday, June 27, 2003

Nigel Dumpster's Diary

Top Diarist's Day of Shame

■ I HAVE SAD news for myself, 62, following my unfortunate appearance yesterday before Old Etonian judge Mr Justice Cocklecarrot, 72, brother of the better-known bon viveur and motor racing enthusiast *(get on with the case – ED)*.

Finding the Sherborne-educated myself guilty of drunk driving, the elderly but still sprightly judge joked that he had never come across such a flagrant and disgraceful liar in all his 42 years on the bench.

Quick as a flash, the sharp-witted and elegantly-dressed myself, immaculately clad in a pinstripe blue suit with a silver and purple old Shirburnian tie, quipped back, 'Of course I'm a liar, your honour, I write a gossip column in the Daily Mail.'

The judge, I am glad to say, looked suitably abashed as he sentenced me to ten years' hard labour.

yesterday sentenced to 50 years of penal servitude in Botany Bay, following a misunderstanding over a drunken driving incident.

When I rang her yesterday to pass on the sad tidings, she told me, 'I am sorry, there is no one here to take your call at present, but if you would like to leave a message I will get back to you, unless you are my husband, in which case you can get stuffed.'

Lady Camilla was last night said to be not being comforted by friends.

Lady Camilla is 61.

Duke's Daughter Unconcerned

■ **I AM sorry to hear that Lady Camilla Dumpster, seventh daughter of the 89th Duke of Maidstone and a distant kinswoman by marriage of Her Late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, 106, has expressed, 'total indifference' to the tragic fate of her estranged husband, myself, who was**

Piss-Ed!

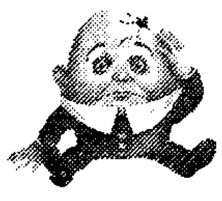
■ **TOP EDITOR Paul Dacre, 72, whose son Kevin, 17, is at school at Eton with Prince William, 21, and Prince Harry, 18, is said by close friends to be 'furious' with his diarist, myself, following an astonishing personal attack by a judge, who accused the balding but debonair man-about-town, myself, of 'shamelessly lying' to cover up his serial offences as a drunken driver.**

Sources close to Dacre told me exclusively yesterday: 'Paul has put up with your piss-poor column for years, but this could well be the last straw.' Is this the end for myself, colleagues were asking last night as they toasted the judge in champagne.

Gossip Man – Mystery Grows

■ FRIENDS of myself were asking last night whether I was still writing this column, following my conviction and sentencing to death for drunken driving earlier this week.

The answer is of course, 'No, of course not, it's being written by some Sloaney girls, just like it always has been, while I am driving around town pissed.'



Old Rhymes Revisited

Humpty Dumpster crashed into a wall
Humpty Dumpster said he hadn't drunk anything at all.

All the Queen's counsel and all the top men,
Couldn't stop Humpty from being banned from ever driving again.

© *All papers except the Daily Mail.*

HARRY POTTER PUBLISHED AMIDST SCENES OF PANDEMONIUM

By our Literary Staff **Simon Hogwarts**

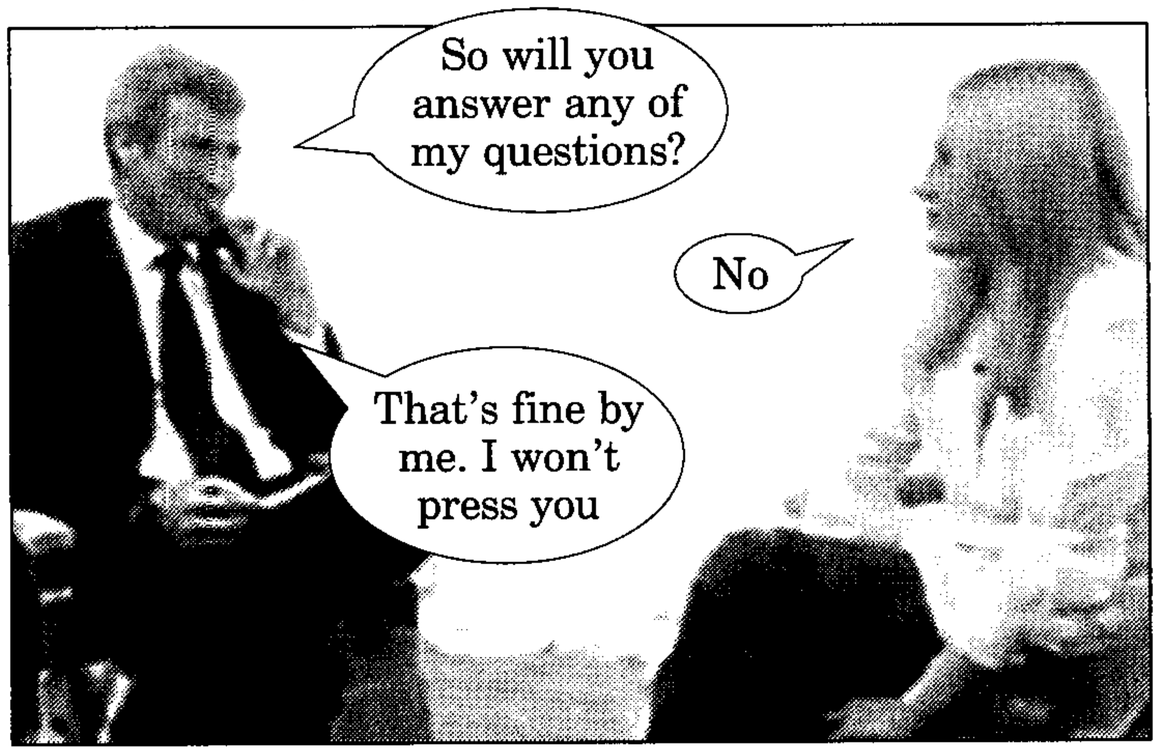
THE NEW Harry Potter book was published at midnight last night to the delight of thousands of journalists who had queued up all night to get their articles into the paper.

Many of the journalists had been waiting for months and their joy at the launch of the book was uncontained. Said one young enthusiast Peter Thomson, 14, "It's just fantastic. It's a terrific story and I can't wait to write it up."

Some critics have worried that the Harry Potter story has been going on too long but this opinion is not shared by the diehard fans in the press.

"We can't get enough of Harry", said a beaming Charles Moore, 11½, "He's wonderful and has the magic power to fill up our paper without us having to put any news in."

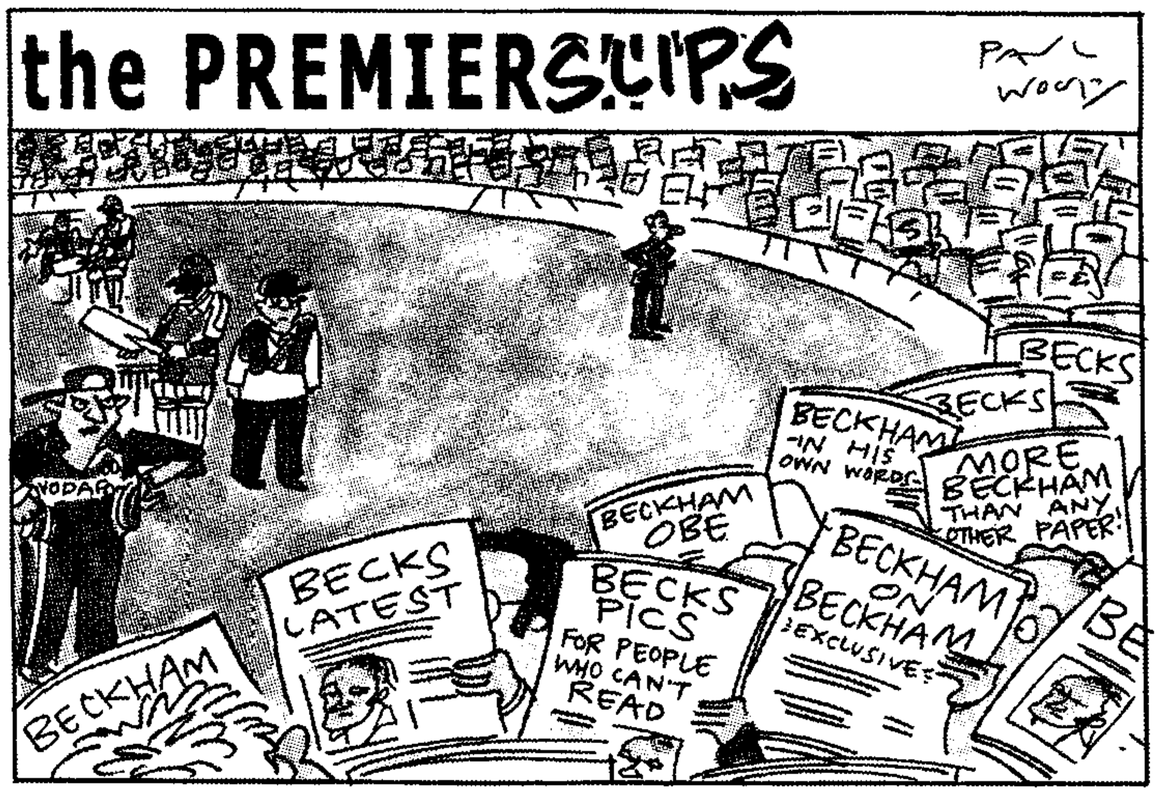
PAXMAN UNDER MAGIC SPELL SHOCK



The Times/Telegraph/Mail/ Guardian/Express/Sun/Mirror Exclusive J.K. ROWLING Interview

THOSE AMAZING REVELATIONS IN FULL

IT'S the same interview as in all the other papers.
Yes, it really is.
Er... that's it.



Iraq Daily Telegraph
27.6.03

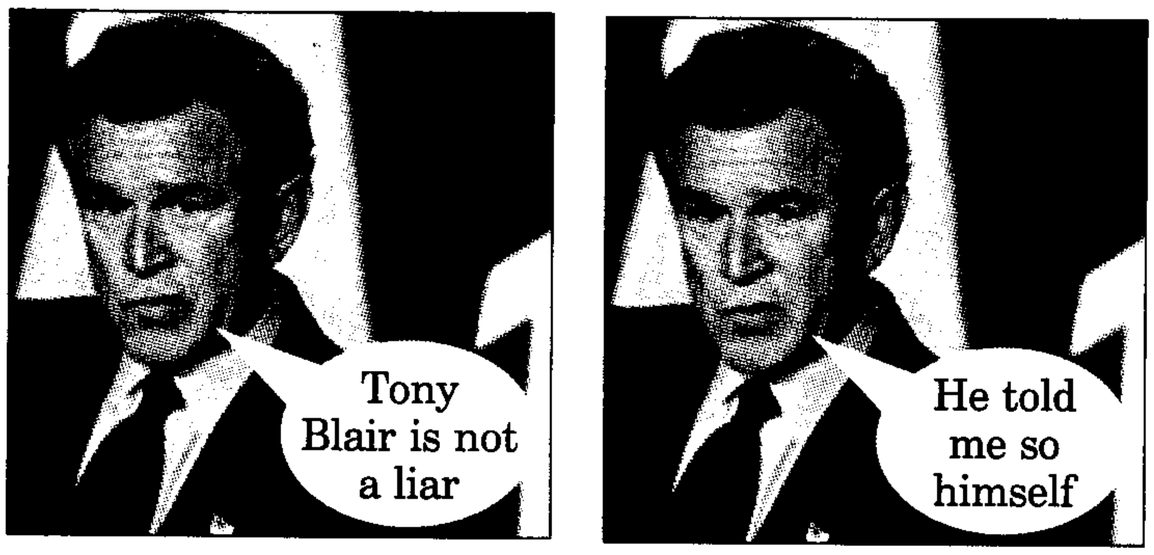
'COUNTRY IN CHAOS' CLAIMS REPORT

DESPITE hopes that the end of the Iraq war would see prosperity quickly return to the country, Britain is "in chaos" with "a complete lack of strategic direction", a senior Iraqi diplomat in London has told the Iraqi Daily Telegraph.

"The country's public services are near collapse, with hospitals, trains and schools unable to cope due to chronic under-funding and mismanagement and there is lawlessness on the streets with people too afraid to go out after dark.

"But rather than tackle these problems, the civilian administrations only seem interested in trying to push through constitutional reforms *(Cont. p. 94)*

WMD SHOCK



IRAQ LATEST

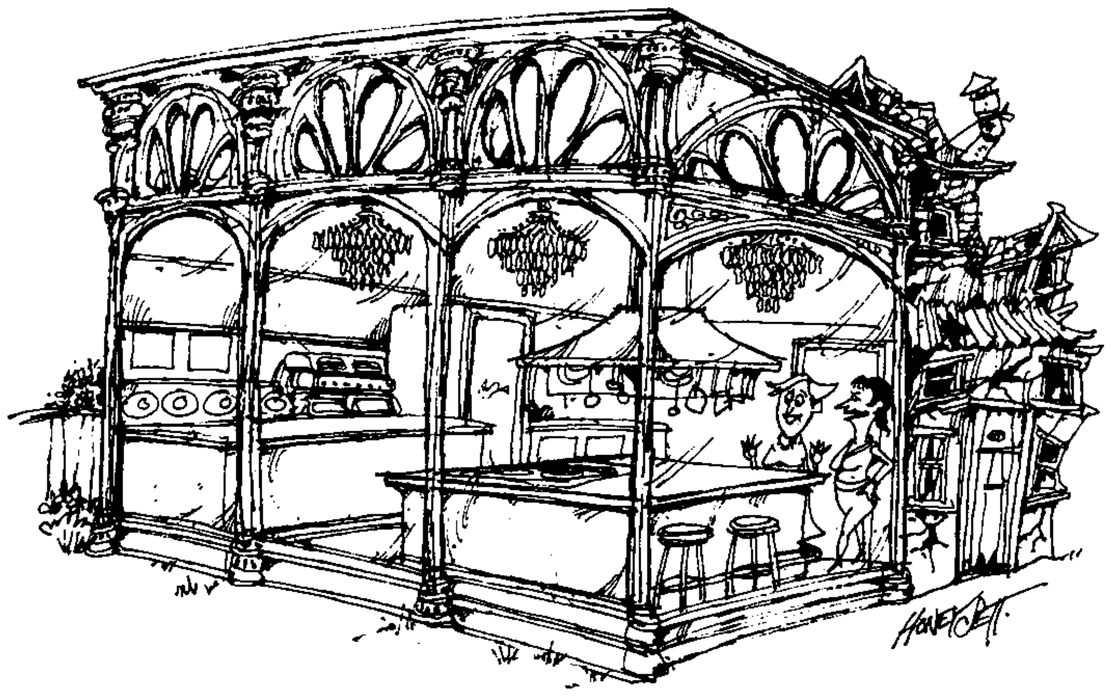
BECKHAM NOT INVOLVED

by Our Foreign Affairs Staff

THE ENGLAND football captain David Beckham was yesterday nowhere near Iraq as hundreds of Iraqis were killed in fighting in the capital Baghdad. Beckham's wife Victoria (known as "Posh") was also not in Iraq as riots rocked the capital, law and order broke down and essential services remained unavailable.

Said a leading Iraqi spokesman, "It's all very well getting rid of Saddam but what we need to know is when is David Beckham moving to Real Madrid and will he wear the number seven shirt?"

ON OTHER PAGES
Train Fares to Rise: Beckham will be in Spain **4**
Reshuffle Chaos as Beckham is Not Made Health Minister **5**
Gay Bishop – Does He Fancy Beckham? **94**



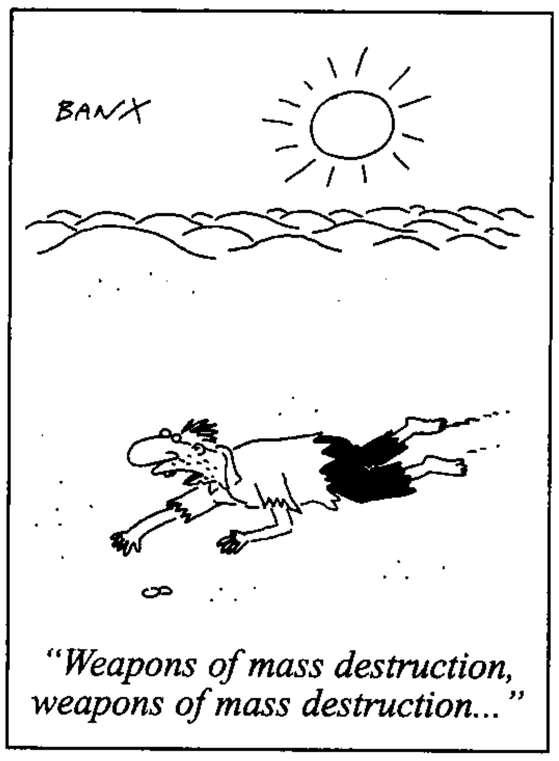
"I must admit, it was the kitchen that sold it to us"

Exclusive Extracts From Harold Pinter's New Book Of Poetry 'Harold Pinter's War'

Bum shit bollocks
And wank,
There goes that twat Bush
In a tank.

Arse, piss, wank
And poo,
Swearing in poems is easy
To do.

It's anti-war, so it's
Alright
To come up with
something
Completely
Fucking
Arseing
Shite.



"Weapons of mass destruction, weapons of mass destruction..."

A Doctor Writes

Hay Fever

AT THIS time of year I am frequently asked, 'Doctor, would you write a column about Hay Fever?'

The simple answer is, 'Yes of course. How much are you offering?'

What happens is that your eyes water at the amount and you decide that this is not to be sneezed at. Bless You.

© A Doctor Stuttaford

A spokesman for **the diocese of Chelmsford** said: **"We are between bishops and are unable to comment."**

Grauniad

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

PRINCE WILLIAM

Your Royal Highness, on the occasion of your 21st birthday, thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to answer our spoon questionnaire. May I first ask you, sire, whether you have a favourite spoon?

The Press are always trying to link me to one particular spoon, but at the moment I like all sorts of spoons...

But, sire, if I may press a point, are there special Royal spoons with crests and so forth that you can use?

I'm aware that there are traditional occasions when those spoons are part of the ritual and fabric of Royalty and obviously it will be my duty to employ them, but as of now I prefer to use the same spoons as everyone else.

What about at College, sire, at the ancient University of St Andrew's?

We all mucked in, nobody had their own private spoons, we all used each other's, you know, um...

I should imagine there were spoon high jinks were there not, sire?

Well, yes, some of my fellow undergraduates did, on occasion, throw a few spoons about during Rag Week, but not nearly as much as the Press made out.

I'm sorry to have to ask this, sire, but our readers would like to know about the reports that you were born with a spoon in your mouth, you know, a silver one...?

I'm afraid I'm not really at liberty to talk about that.

I'm sorry, sire. In that case, is there anything else you would like to share with us?

I'd just like to say that Her Majesty the Queen has done a magnificent job in cataloguing the Royal Spoon Collection, including the famous Leonardo Sweetex, which is a spoon specially designed to dispense lumps of sugar by a spring mechanism, which is pretty amazing really...

I am indebted to Your Majesty and I would not dream of asking you if anything amusing had ever happened to you in connection with a spoon.

Well, actually there was that time when Wombat and Rupert got hold of this spoon and shoved it...

Royal Press Officer: That's all we've got time for, Your Majesty.

NEXT WEEK: Estelle Morris – *"Me and My Morris."*

DIARY

THE DINNER PARTY INSPECTORS

VICTORIA MATHER: Darling! How art thou, this fair morn? In the finest of fettles, I trust?!!

MEREDITH ETHERINGTON-SMITH: Darling! I art in simply fettle finest!

MATHER: This week, methinks darling, an invitation has arrived to 'do' aboard an aeroplane!

SMITH: An aeroplane, forsooth!!

MATHER: Yes, An aeroplane!!!

SMITH: An aeroplane!!!! How simply …aeroplane-ish.

MATHER: Erm. Yes.

MATHER: Do look, darling – all the little people are boarding their aeroplane!

SMITH: What do we THINK about boarding aeroplanes, darling?

MATHER: Very necessary, if one wants to travel on them!

SMITH: Very necessary indeed.

MATHER: Yes – very necessary!! I say, look at that chap, darling – he's sitting in an aisle seat, third class!!!

SMITH: How common, darling!

MATHER: What do we THINK about common people, darling?

SMITH: I don't know about you darling, but I find them fearfully…COMMON!!!!

MATHER: I met one once.

SMITH: Not to SPEAK to, darling?

MATHER: Yes, darling – to SPEAK TO!

SMITH: But what ON EARTH did you SAY?

MATHER: I informed him in no uncertain terms that he wasn't holding his knife properly, darling.

SMITH: You didn't!! Was he a fellow guest, darling?

MATHER: No, darling. My surgeon.

MATHER: Do look, darling! The aeroplane has taken awf – and they're serving all the little people their luncheon!

SMITH: Or "dinner" as they'd probably call it, poor things!

MATHER: What do we THINK of people who call luncheon "dinner"?

SMITH: Perfectly ghastly, darling – perfectly ghastly!

MATHER: Perfectement ghastlioso!

SMITH: Ghastlioso perfectementi!!

MATHER: Oh, no! I can't belieeeve it, darling! The man in the aisle seat has finished his luncheon – and now he's wiping himself with his perfectly FRIGHTFUL little face-wipe! One oughtest never to employ a face-wipe in public, darling, oughtest one?

SMITH: One verily oughtest not, darling. And look at the little man's little wife, darling – she's putting a little sugar in her little coffee! One can hardly bear to watch! What do we THINK about putting sugar in one's coffee, darling?

MATHER: Definitely a no-no, unless one is a builder or something big in sewage.

SMITH: Which one is most definitely not, forsooth!!! More sherry, darling?

MATHER: Do look, darling! The aeroplane has hit a spot of turbulence!

SMITH: What do we THINK of turbulence, darling?

MATHER: Frightfully common. Definitely to be ignored!

SMITH: Definitely to be ignored!!

MATHER: Yes – definitely to be ignored!!! I say, do look – there are flames simply everywhere! I do believe their awful little aeroplane is on fire!

SMITH: Very bad form, darling!

MATHER: It's plummeting to earth!

SMITH: How common!

MATHER: And they're all in the most dreadful tizz!

SMITH: Badly brought up, darling! A classic case of bad behaviour. I was always taught that if ever one was facing imminent death in an air crash, one did so with dignity.

MATHER: Whoops! The pilot's crashed it into the side of a mountain, darling!

SMITH: Clumsy clot! What would nanny say?

MATHER: I believe it's somewhere in the Andes!

SMITH: Not the ANDES, darling! Very non-U!

MATHER: Quite! It's perfectly acceptable to crash one's plane into the Pyrenees, or even the Himalayas – but not the ANDES!

SMITH: No, not the ANDES! Mind you, darling, I simply can't WAIT to see if there are any little survivors! One should never emerge from an aeroplane with cuts and burns. It's a golden rule, darling. I mean, just IMAGINE their embarrassment!!!

MATHER: The poor little survivors have been stuck in the Andes for six weeks now, darling.

SMITH: I think that is called overstaying one's welcome, darling.

MATHER: Their food ran out simply YONKS ago, darling. One does feel sorry for them, one really does. They must be dreadfully peckish.

SMITH: More sherry darling? Canape?

MATHER: Oh, syooper! Mmmm...lovely.

SMITH: Good lord! Do look!! The little man from the aisle seat is dragging himself over to one of the corpses, darling! And he's holding a knife and fork!

MATHER: In the wrong manner, needless to say! My goodness, I do believe he's going to start tucking into the corpse, darling. One almost can't bear to look! He's carving from the buttock!

SMITH: Poor form. One should NEVER EVER carve from the buttock. Now, tell me, darling, what do we THINK about eating human being?

MATHER: My golden rule about eating human being is never as a starter. I suppose it's just about acceptable in a warm stew on a cold winter's night. But this poor little chap is serving it RAW, would you believe!

SMITH: Quite unacceptable. And so unfair on one's guests. Now this is an interesting point. Is it better or worse, darling, to tuck in to a close friend – or a complete and utter stranger?

MATHER: Friends, of course. In a red wine sauce –

SMITH: – a red wine sauce!! –

MATHER: – they can be positively scrumptious.

SMITH: Positivo scrumptioso!

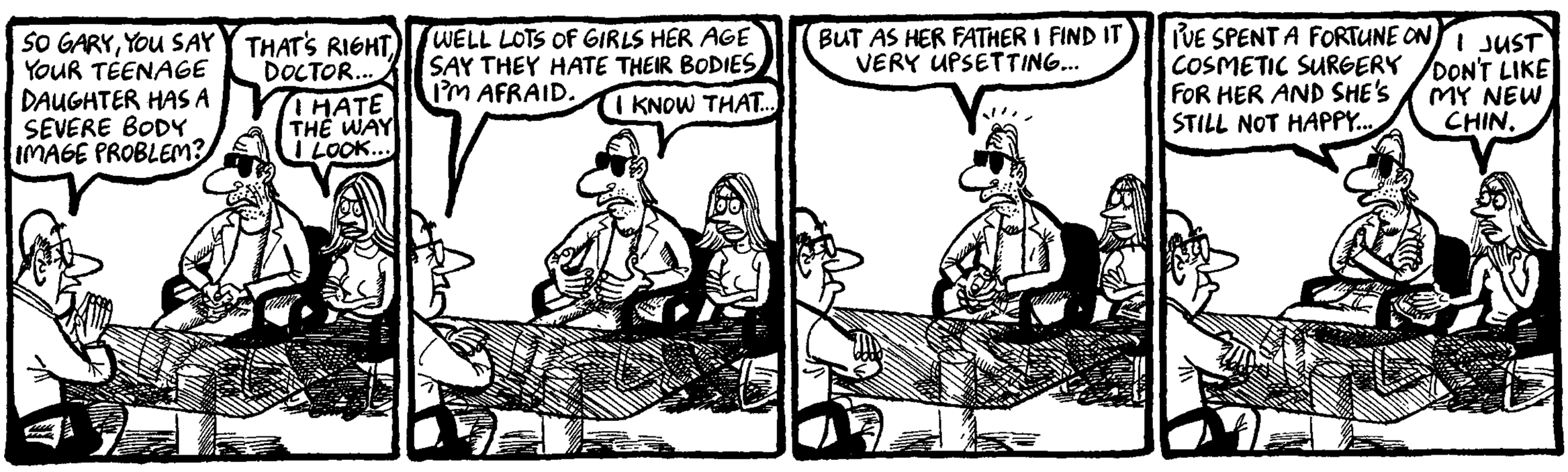
MATHER: And so we leave our little friends to their mountainside, but first, as should always be the case, Meredith and I are sending a prompt thank you letter, offering a few words of advice.

SMITH: "Victoria and I would like to thank you for allowing us to observe and inspect your splendid aeroplane party. We are dreadfully sorry there were so many spillages. May we be so bold as to offer a few words of advice? In future, if your pilot MUST crash-land, do make sure it is into one of the more acceptable mountain-ranges. And finally, if one is forced to consume a fellow-passenger, do at least choose one with a public-school education.

Warmest regards, Victoria and Meredith."

As told to

CRAIG BROWN


SO GARY, YOU SAY YOUR TEENAGE DAUGHTER HAS A SEVERE BODY IMAGE PROBLEM?
THAT'S RIGHT, DOCTOR...
I HATE THE WAY I LOOK...
WELL LOTS OF GIRLS HER AGE SAY THEY HATE THEIR BODIES I'M AFRAID.
I KNOW THAT...
BUT AS HER FATHER I FIND IT VERY UPSETTING...
I'VE SPENT A FORTUNE ON COSMETIC SURGERY FOR HER AND SHE'S STILL NOT HAPPY...
I JUST DON'T LIKE MY NEW CHIN.

Literary Review

Rock of aged

The Sound and the Fury
Edited by Barney Hoskyns
(*Bloomsbury, £8.99*)

THOUGH presented as a thrilling antidote to the tame commercialism of current pop, nothing could be less rock 'n' roll (or indeed more pipe 'n' slippers) than this selection of misty-eyed "rockstalgia".

Beatlemania! Glam! Punk! Northern Soul! The miseries of Morrissey from Manchester! The Queen herself might enjoy this jubilee trip down memory lane, fondly recalling the succession of rebel yells that didn't rock the boat much after all.

Subtitled "40 years of classic rock journalism", this book amply demonstrates two major impediments to taking such writing seriously. First, it generally says nothing intelligible about the music. Mostly it's about the musicians, their personality (disorders), delusions of grandeur (both Joni Mitchell and Marvin Gaye compare themselves here to Beethoven), penile dementia (with added spandex) and so forth. Sometimes it's also about the fans. At the bottom end it's little better than gossip. At the top end, there's the "rockademic" element, redundant sociologists expatiating (with footnotes) on the more yawn-making aspects of yoof culcha.

The second problem is that music journos are often failed musos themselves. They like the music and lifestyle and want an excuse to hang around with their heroes or anti-heroes. They tend to express their adulation (or bitter envy) in hyperbolic terms, in a bid to generate the same excitement (or anger) as the music itself. This rarely works. Hence the oft-used disclaimer, "you had to be there, man". Too bad if you weren't.

Like sports journalism, rock writing also attracts star writers who fancy a bit of slumming. Thus we have here Will Self mirrorgazing with Morrissey and Nick Hornby on why Abba's greatest hits really are their best, and you can forget the (boxed set) rest. Hornby is keen to let drop that one of his mates runs a record shop, just like in his book *High Fidelity*, while Self is no less keen to drop such names as Orton, Wilde and, er, Kenneth Williams into the mix. Heavy! It's all a bit like when Martin Amis did a spot of tennis coverage.

Other contributors include such music press stalwarts as Charles Shaar Murray, Caroline Coon, Mick Brown, Greil Marcus and Jon Savage. Their articles were mostly written in the heat of the moment, and not expected to long outlast their deadlines. Resuscitating them has a certain archival curiosity, but confers a dubious retrospective validity. To be told that the Beatles were likeable lads, that punk music was loud and basic, or that grunge had a tragic undertow, is a little stale at this remove. It's history written by the victors, or at any rate their fans.

On the whole you can tell when someone was born by taking what he or she declares to be the last decent musical movement and subtracting 17 from its date. Thus if you think punk was the last time music actually meant anything (school of 76), chances are you're currently in your early 40s. If grunge is your game, you'll be a decade and a half younger, though there will be older ones who liked grunge for reminding them of punk. If you liked Britpop then you probably weren't born when the Kinks were doing it properly, and if you like rap then you're a white suburban mammy's boy with pimples (or possibly a *Guardian* journalist with guilt).

My guess is that Barney Hoskyns, the editor of this anthology, is somewhere in his early 40s and his taste in music is catholic but uncontroversial. He includes nothing earlier than the Beatles (an older man would've considered Elvis or Chuck Berry unmissable) and nothing more recent than rap, which is castigated for being, hold the front page, rather rude and mean to the ladies.

Other unsurprising discoveries include the excellence of Eric Clapton's guitar playing; the strictness of David Bowie's image-control; the mercurial nature of Bob Dylan's views on life; the cowboy commercialism of Nashville; the wonderful atmosphere of those early pop festivals and how, thanks to the Hell's Angels, everything turned nasty at Altamont in 69.

Few of the pieces are as cringingly adulatory as the interview of Madonna by her friend Glenn O'Brien, in which he dutifully records her calling him, approvingly, "a really evolved guy". But equally few are as bracingly critical as John Mendelssohn's on Niggaz With Attitude, comparing the gangsta rappers to an old time minstrel show, "black persons pretending to be subhuman for the entertainment of white people".

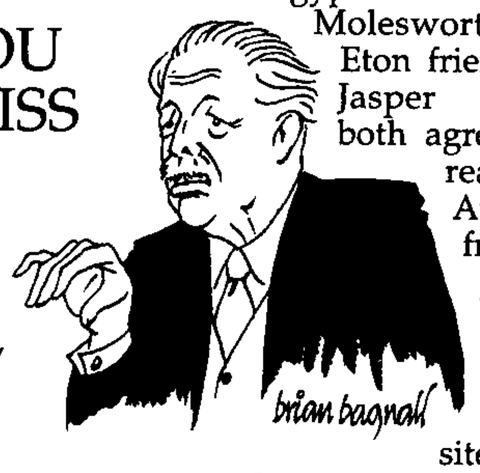
Hoskyns contends that while record sales are plummeting and the music press is in perilous decline we have a "sacred duty" to "inject magic and danger" into the bloodstream. He set up his website rocksbackpages.com to shore these and other fragments against the general ruin. To some extent, eg as to pop's current state, he's right. But there was always a majority of rubbish in the charts.

The difference now is that it's not just the record companies doing the exploiting: mainstream publishers are falling over each other to put out collections of old lyrics posing as poems, ghosted memoirs of greying old rockers and, er, job-lots of journalism from the perilously declined old music press.

Far from furious, and saying little about the actual sounds, this book's true measure lies in what its title omits from the implied quotation from Macbeth: "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS Pt.94

The Macmillan Diaries:
The Cabinet Years,
1950 – 1957
(*Macmillan, £25*)



28 October 1951

A summons to visit the P.M. This I had expected. Found him in a most amiable mood. "Harold, my boy" he greeted me. "I want you to build houses for the people." "Goodness" I remarked. "What sort of houses? And which people?" "Heaven knows" he replied, "but it's in the manifesto. Think of the kind of thing you and Dorothy have at Birch Grove and reduce accordingly I suppose." The P.M.'s sallies are always amusing at these times. It is all rather inconvenient, as I afterwards intimated to Biggles [the Rt Hon. Ralph Biggleswade, Lord Privy Seal] but one's only ambition is to serve. In the evening read Scott's *Ivanhoe*. Frightfully good.

27 July 1956

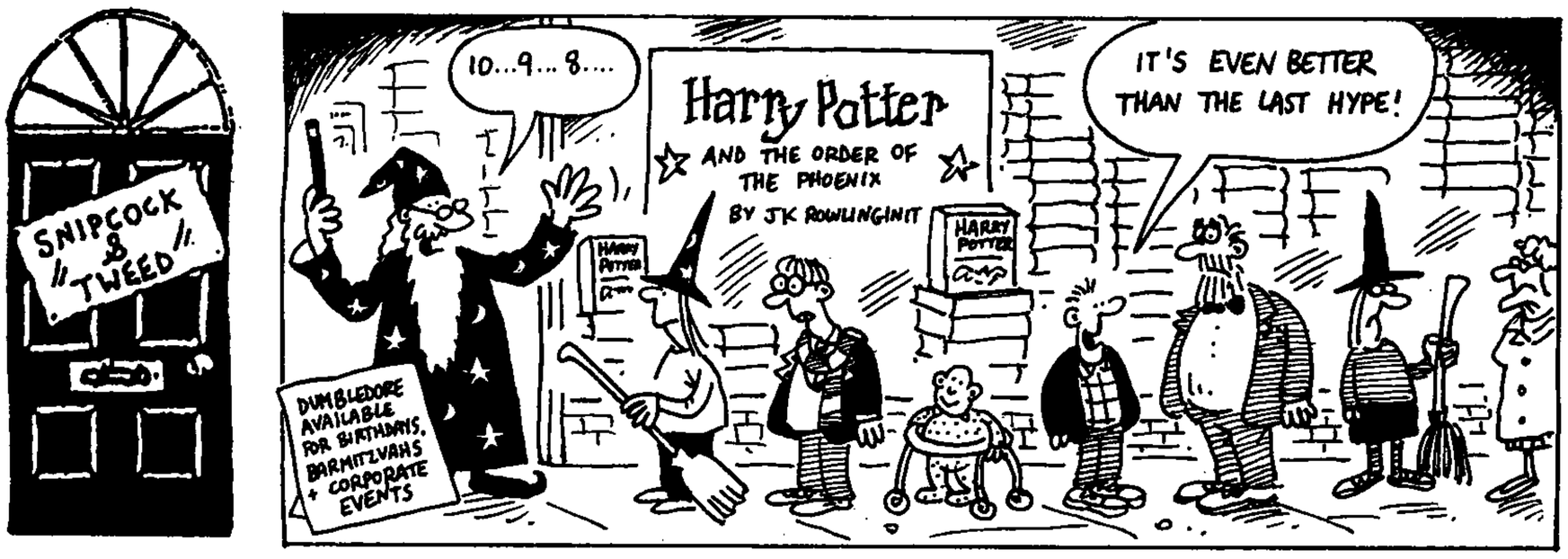
Awakened by the butler with the unwelcome news that Nasser has seized the Suez Canal. Rather inconvenient, as I was to have addressed the Orpington Ladies' Trefoil Guild this forenoon. Doubt very much whether Nasser is a gentleman – would certainly not be the kind of person allowed into Pratt's – but of course one is no longer allowed to say such things. At the Egypt committee Moley [Viscount Molesworth, M's cherished Eton friend] and Pilkers [Sir Jasper Smythe-Pilkington] both agreed. In the evening read Trollope, Jane Austen, Macaulay. All frightfully good.

12 January 1957

Greatly annoyed by the behaviour of my Socialist opposite number, Mr Cyril Snargs. Quite the meanest man I know. How well I remember the distress of poor Bobbety [Sir Robert Twistleton-Arbuthot CH], when serving as Snargs' PPS during the war, at being compelled to fetch his superior's fried fish and potatoes each night in a paper bag. This, alas, is the cast of the Socialist mind! In the evening read George Eliot, Dickens. The latter I think a very brilliant writer indeed.

3 February 1957

It seems that the postal, rail and steel strikes are shortly to be settled. This is splendid news and reflects great credit on all those involved. Discovered that Anthony [Eden] is not at all well. Later, Moley, Bobbety, Pilkers and the others said I could be Prime Minister. This is terribly kind of them and I shall try to do my best. Saw the Queen, who was looking very young and regal. Read R.L. Stevenson, who is really frightfully good [*continues for thousands of pages*]



Dick Litt

Finding Myself

Toby Litt

(*Hamish Hamilton, £14.99*)

NASTY little word, *Zeitgeist*. Using it in normal conversation without irony is risky enough (as it can make you look like an idiot); but pinning your career to it, as Toby Litt and several other bearded young novelists have done, is even more perilous.

If you're that determined to be up-to-the-minute, the terrible time lags of publishing can only work against you, so that when the book finally comes out, you're only up-to-the-minute-before-last. And then you really look stupid.

Finding Myself, which must be about the 11th clever-clever take on reality TV this month, has had the most awful pasting from the critics, who may have been waiting for this opportunity for a while. Two years ago Litt's premise probably sounded quite good. A chick-lit author comes up with an idea for her new book: to throw 10 people into a house on the Suffolk coast for a month, put secret cameras in every room, see what happens and turn it into a book.

Reading this sentence, you can almost hear Litt cracking his satirical knuckles at the prospect. Take the piss out of chick-lit novelists, out of *Big Brother* (without ever actually mentioning the show, curiously), out of media London generally (which of course no one else has ever done), and out of the whole overarching artificiality of your own project, with such a savage smirk that world irony resources might be permanently depleted. We're talking high concept... we're talking *Zeitgeist*... we're talking nonsense.

The first problem is the narrator, Victoria About, 30-year-old author of such novels as *Join-the-dots*, *The Sweet Spot* and *Incredibly Well-Hung: A Satire of the Art World*. This is in truth a very mild satire of the media world, although Victoria seems to have had as easy and untroubled a rise to the top as Litt himself. Is she some sort of skewed self-portrait? Not that you'll care, as her unshakeable complacency and solipsism helpfully shield us from any sort of emotional engagement in her or her dull friends.

Like most male writers who can't write women, Litt makes his anti-heroine sound like a very queeny gay man. The other characters sound like her too, which may be either an unreliable-narrator-kind of post-modernist trick, or ineptitude – it's hard to say. Curiously, Litt is quick to pre-empt most potential criticisms by making them himself in invisible quotation marks. He'll use a cliché, then have Victoria complain what a cliché it was, and that she'd never allow anything so clichéd to happen in one of her novels. I think we are all supposed to smile knowingly at the ingenious subversion of fictional convention, rather than tearing out the pages and setting fire to them one by one.

It's all a sad waste of energy, paper and talent. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Litt can write and has some good ideas. The best here are the interventions in blue pen of Victoria's editor, who crosses out unusable passages in the manuscript and anything mentioning her own husband, whom Victoria dislikes. It's a gimmick, to be sure, but it generates most of the best jokes in a book not otherwise notable for its light touch.

But does anyone need another novel about media London? Publishers like them because they drink at Soho House too, but no one buys them and even close relatives of the author struggle to read them to the end. This book can have no constituency beyond the M25 – or the North Circular Road, come to that. Overlong, rambling, simultaneously abstruse and trivial, it's a work of eyesight-threatening self-indulgence.

Books & Bookmen

■ The farce of the Deansgate One (see Eyes passim) is over and Ben McCrory, the poor, wronged bookseller at the centre of the affair, has been exonerated utterly by an employment tribunal. McCrory has been bound, by the terms of his settlement, not to speak to the press. Even without corroboration from McCrory, however, it emerges that the employment tribunal was an abject humiliation for Waterstone's. It was established that neither McCrory nor anyone else had been stealing. Tills were regularly found to be inaccurate by incredibly small amounts, but this is a common enough occurrence in most fields of retail, not just bookselling.

It seems that Waterstone's – by turns bullying and bungling – resorted to strange tactics to derail McCrory's fight for justice. At one point, the company tried to smear McCrory by suggesting that he had sent pornographic material anonymously through the post to senior Deansgate managers. In fact, the 'porn' was merely a set of proofs sent by a publisher for their forthcoming 'art publications'. The porn revelation was obviously intended to make McCrory curl up like a salted slug and withdraw his objections. However, when that gambit failed, the company contrived to prolong the hearing to four days in the hope of forcing McCrory to climb down and accept their initial derisory settlement.

When the hearings finally got underway, Deansgate manager Lynda Tyson was upbraided for not following correct procedure and castigated further for not having a very good grasp of McCrory's employment record – when asked how long he had worked for the company, she was unable to answer. As a result of the tribunal's findings, McCrory received in full the back pay he was due and a substantial amount in compensation. The only result of lengthening the hearings has been to double the sizeable fees the chain will have to pay to its lawyers. Is this any way to run the nation's premier bookselling chain?

'Bookworm'

Warballs

"Marian Salzman said her research for the world's fifth largest advertising agency, Euro RSCG Worldwide, showed that men had been neutered – not just by feminism and women in the workplace, but by the political events of the past three years: 11 September, the Iraq war and Private Jessica Lynch's usurping of the traditional male battlefield bravado had blurred their sense of self." — *Guardian*.

"In the wake of 11 September and all the other things that have been going on I was a little disheartened by the state of the world and I felt that humanity was in grave jeopardy and that it would be nice to do something like this." — Charlie Hunnam, on his role in the forthcoming film of *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Birmingham Post*.

11.05 Real Sex. Action from a crucial title showdown match in the Eredivisie. With PSV Eindhoven, Ajax and Feyenoord all in contention, who will be crowned champions? (R) *4492742*

Scottish Sunday Herald

Pseuds Corner

As Osborne observes, despite the challenges of semiotic critical programmes and the Duchampian conception of the art object (in both its 'original' manifestation and its contemporary revivals), the inability of these paradigms to account for art's specificity as a cultural form has led to an implicit reliance upon Romanticism for the identity and cultural authority of contemporary art.

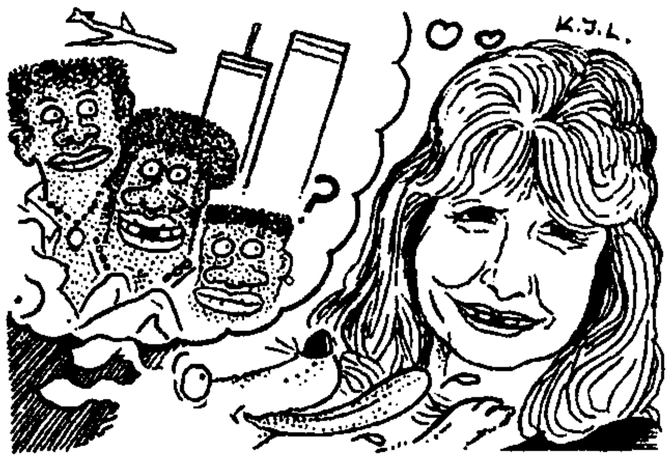
From CHRIS TOWNSEND and MANDY MERCK
The Art of Tracey Emin

There's been some attempt to talk up Pen-ek [film director Pen-ek Ratanaraung] as 'the next Wong Kar-Wei', but it's a waste of breath: anyone who hasn't yet noticed toe-curlingly wonderful things happening in Thai cinema isn't paying attention anyway.

TONY RAYNS, reviewing 'Mon-rak Transistor' ['A Transistor Love Story']
Time Out

Most of all, it was men who never recovered from Morrissey – the last two decades of British masculinity have been shaped by him. Fathered, even. His Smiths period handsome androgyny and narcissism anticipated New Man; his early solo work, with its preoccupation with gangsters, boxers and "low-life" prefigured New Lad – albeit artistic and passionate, where what followed was cynical and commercial... [*continues*]

MARK SIMPSON
Guardian Guide



My new book has got paedophilia, September 11 and lots of black people in it. I'm moving on, we've got to progress.

JILLY COOPER speaking at the Hay Literary Festival, quoted in the *Guardian*

She's been described as the modern-day Charles Dickens and her writing has probably given joy to more people than any other novelist.

LYNDA LEE-POTTER on Jilly Cooper
Daily Mail

Pseuds Corporate

Planet Corporate Medical PR embrace the notion that with an Holistic approach to any project, Appropriate Market Environment Awareness and real Crisis Management Formulae their Clients Psychological impact on the Public, Media and Healthcare Professionals with whom they wish to interact remains and stays positive.

Using Pro-active and Re-active PR strategies they ensure informed Service Provision to their Clients and offer a powerful insight into the art of Mass Motivational Psychology

Pharmaceutical Field

CONTRIBUTORS: Arthur Wren, A. Hurman, Oliver Pearce, Michael Grosvenor Myer, M. McKay, Stephen Chambers

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

THE ARTFUL DODGERS

Tax and bend

THE Inland Revenue's chief artful dodger, Sir Nicolas Montagu, was back before the treasury select committee last week, accused of "obfuscation" and misleading the committee over the sale of 600 government buildings to a company based in a tax haven.

It was always going to be a difficult afternoon for the Revenue boss, especially as the committee members were armed not only with *Private Eye's* extensive coverage of the matter, but also the treasury's assurance that it would not – as Montagu had told them at a previous hearing – have been illegal to disqualify the off-shore firm Mapeley from bidding for the deal. In fact the latest government guidance has been amended to advise that any future similar deals take account of such details.

Despite that, Montagu continued to insist that the Revenue "regarded itself as bound by the Green Book [the previous set of procurement guidance]" which said tax issues shouldn't be considered.

Challenged by committee member John McFall that the Revenue was blinkered by the fact that it "had a book and a set of rules and… weren't going to think outside the box", Montagu replied: "We were not going to think outside the law". This prompted Conservative chairman Michael Fallon and Lib Dem committee member Norman Lamb to exclaim in chorus: "But the law is still exactly the same!"

With tempers rising the committee moved on to discuss at what stage ministers had known about the Bermuda connection. At the previous hearing the committee had heard Montagu explain how he had apologised to paymaster-general Dawn Primarolo for not keeping her informed of the tax avoidance issues *before* the contract was signed in 2001. But Red Dawn was not the only minister involved.

The contract for the deal – which mentioned Mapeley's Bermuda registration – had to be signed by John Prescott (see *Eye* 1081) because as secretary of state for environment, transport and the regions he was the nominal "owner" of the buildings. Lamb asked whether Prescott's aides had read the contract and briefed the minister before it was signed in his name. Montagu's sidekick Dave Hartnett, head of tax policy (actually present to answer later questions on the tax credits fiasco) chipped in: "The contract was massive." Because, er, the size of the document is a reasonable excuse for a government minister not to be aware of what's signed in his name?

Asked whether he had considered his own position, Montagu revealed that he had discussed resignation but "the chancellor has made it clear to me that my job is to continue leading the revenue". In fact, far from taking umbrage at his ministers not being kept informed, Gordon Brown issued a statement before the hearing, saying Montagu had his "full confidence". The committee is clearly less convinced.

Of course, by remaining in post until his job ends next year, Montagu will perhaps continue to deflect criticism from ministers. However, Red Dawn will have to answer challenges as to what she knew and when she knew it when she faces the committee in July.

No one in the entire chain of events has ever been disciplined for the series of failures, including failing to keep ministers informed of events, with Montagu telling the committee that they preferred to see lessons for better staff training rather than any need for "scapegoating".

Yet, oddly, Montagu seemed perfectly happy to hand the committee the head of one of his underlings – the director of the National Insurance contributions office (NICO) – on a silver platter. When the committee moved on to quizzing the Revenue boss on why the paymaster-general had not been kept informed of plans relating to national insurance deficiency notices he commented: "I would have expected the director of NICO to be responsible for informing the minister."

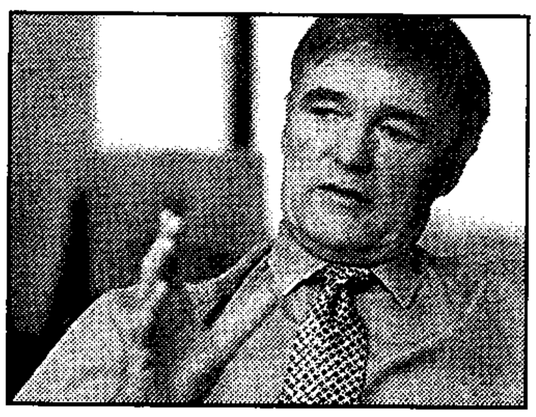
Customs & Exit

THE government was so impressed by the Eye's supplement on the sale of customs buildings to a company in a tax haven (Bermuda), it immediately awarded the chairman of HM Customs and Excise responsible for the sale – Richard Broadbent – a KCB in the Queen's birthday honours.

Meanwhile, as the *Eye* has observed, Mr Broadbent has resigned his chairmanship. The *Eye* could not believe that he was pushed out because of the Bermuda scandal, but now who knows? Apparently he wants to join the board of the big property speculator Land Securities, and is waiting for permission to do so from the portentous commission that vets the departure of senior civil servants to new jobs in private industry.

If Broadbent gets permission, his former job at customs will help him a lot. Land Securities was part of the Trillium consortium that bid for the contract to buy the customs buildings in the first place but lost out to Mapeley, which was based in Bermuda.

Now Land Securities/Trillium has won the contract for the sale of all the buildings owned by



Richard Broadbent

the department for work and pensions. The contract is likely to be worth some £2bn. If the companies want to bid again for any government buildings, no one will know more about the delicate details of such a controversial sale than Mr Broadbent – and Mapeley may now be frowned on in high places because of the row stirred up by the *Eye*.

Whether the appointments commission would regard this experience as giving rise to a possible conflict of interest remains to be seen.

Mind your tax

ON 22 May, barely a week after the *Eye*'s supplement on the sale of Inland Revenue and customs buildings to a company in a tax haven, government departments were being warned to be on their guard.

Brian Glicksman, treasury officer of accounts, wrote to all departments advising them to watch out for any contracts with private companies that might involve tax avoidance, and to steer clear of "offshore jurisdictions" that might jeopardise the government's commitment to "tax transparency and openness".

Mr Glicksman is a keen *Eye* reader and has a satirical sense of humour. His conclusion was as follows: "Guidance on individual cases which departments consider might be covered by this letter should be sought from the Inland Revenue or Customs and Excise."

IT hits the fan

READERS of the last *Eye* may recall the not altogether robust answers given by HM Customs and Excise (HMCE) to our questions about the sale of half a billion pounds worth of customs IT equipment to the Japanese company Fujitsu.

Customs flatly denied taking back work that was previously contracted to the company. But this seems to conflict with the fact that in one large office alone, in 2001 HMCE spent about £250,000 on external contractor resources to support Fujitsu's roll-out of desk-top computers, despite the clear responsibility of the company for this update.

The exercise, incidentally, was originally promised by Fujitsu for the year 2000 and is still not complete. Other interesting facts about the contract not mentioned in the formal answers are:

More than 100 full-time Customs staff have been employed as "interface" with Fujitsu, very many more than the number envisaged in the original calculation of the PFI value.

There have been 30 proposed changes to the original contract. The 30th (known as CCN30) is still awaiting treasury approval. This is a very high number for such a short period of time – just three years. Curiously, not one of the changes has resulted in lower charges for HMCE (ie the taxpayer).

What a lotto the goverment's gotto

AN interesting example of the government's determination to hang on to lottery funds supposedly destined for good causes is the strange story of the national lottery distribution fund (NLDF).

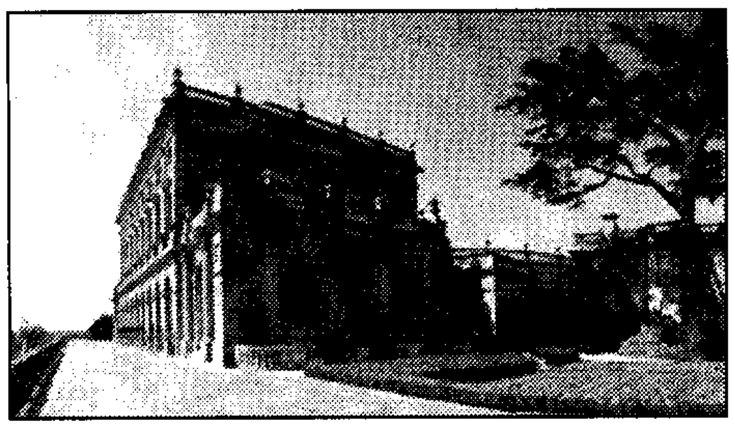
Money raised in the lottery goes into the NLDF, and from there to 15 distributors – arts and sports councils, community funds and the like. For many years the Council for the Advancement of Arts Recreation and Education (CAARE), whose president is the conductor Denis Vaughan, has been campaigning to release the enormous funds for the benefit of sports and arts for youth.

The government responded with assurances that the money would indeed be paid out. In April 2000, when Chris Smith was culture secretary, he said: "More than £2bn has already been committed and will soon be paid out." Nearly two years later, the *Sunday Times* reported (on 20 Jan 2002) that culture secretary Tessa Jowell was "calling in" the heads of the lottery boards to instruct them to "cut the £3.5bn hoard in half as soon as possible".

In March 2002 Ms Jowell was quoted in the Scottish *Sunday Mail* as saying: "It's clear the high level of funds currently held in the NLDF is, and should be, a cause for concern. I do not consider it right that money should be sitting unspent while parts of the country are losing out on lottery funding."

By May this year the *Financial Mail on Sunday* was quoting a spokesman for the department for culture, media 'n' sport as saying: "The secretary of state ordered the lottery funds to halve the surplus by June 2004. We believe we are on target for that." *Whoops!* According to the department's own figures, by the end of last year the surplus had stayed absolutely rigid at £3.5bn and in the latest month's figures – for May – the surplus has actually gone up by £5m, leaving it £659m above its target.

There are some like Mr Vaughan who harbour the shocking suspicion that the government has ordered the distributors to hang on to the surplus so the treasury can benefit from it; and that the national audit office is collaborating. Perish the thought.



Astor la vista

THE National Trust, supposed defender of the English countryside and historic landscapes, is branching out... into house-building.

It wants to build 200 new homes on land which is not merely greenbelt but is under its own protection at Cliveden, the former Astor family estate in Berkshire.

Handing over the estate to the nation in 1942, Viscount Astor wrote to the National Trust: "I have given up on my behalf and on behalf of future owners the right of converting it into a speculators' building estate."

The plans are for 198 new, high-density, eco-friendly homes on an area of the estate classified as brownfield, even though it is surrounded by protected greenbelt countryside. The area was used for a hospital (it closed in 1986) and is thus available for building on. Despite promises that there will be new bus routes and householders will be encouraged to work from home, Taplow parish councillors wonder how green the homes will really be, since the main way to Taplow station four miles away will be by car.

The trust says Viscount Astor always intended the hospital site to help raise funds for the upkeep of the house and grounds.

The parish council recently held a media briefing for local newspapers and radio stations to put forward its side in the row. Having already shooed away one of the senior Cliveden staff from the event, the councillors became suspicious of one of the hacks, who gave his name as Jonathan Gimblett and claimed to be from a small, new, Essex-based magazine.

After the briefing, the chairman of planning called the offices of Countryside Properties and asked to be put through to a Jonathan Gimblett, and was duly put through to his extension. Co-incidence?

Even the NT accepts that putting up housing estates is not in its usual line of work. "It is not the trust's mandate to be producing such developments, but it is a singular opportunity," said Stuart Arden, Cliveden project manager for the NT.

EXXON-erated?

Last *Eye*'s story on the long-running dispute between barrister Michael Ford and the world's largest company, Exxon, rang bells in Australia.

Eye readers there noticed coincidences between the power station disaster in Hong Kong that started the Ford story and a spectacular power station explosion at Longford, Victoria, a few years later. Both disasters left two workers dead and many others injured – and both stations were owned by a subsidiary of Exxon.

Five years after Michael Ford was hired to represent the company at an inquest in Hong Kong in 1993 (he was dismissed, he says, when he refused to conceal evidence damaging to his client), a giant gas-processing plant owned by Esso Australia blew up.

In May 1999 the Australian Broadcasting Company ran an investigative TV programme about the explosion entitled ESSO HAS COVER-UP STRATEGY. Michael Ford appeared on the programme to discuss yet another coincidence between the two explosions: the way Esso tried to cover up the true facts of the disaster by arguing that they were covered by legal privilege and client confidentiality.

Paul Scanlon, Australian barrister for the trade unions involved at Longford, had told the royal commission into the disaster that the evidence on the explosion had been "sanitised for public consumption". Exactly the same thing, said Mr Ford, had happened to the evidence before the coroner in Hong Kong. The presenter of the ABC programme, Jill Singer, observed: "This is precisely

the strategy lawyers for the insurance council and others have accused Esso Australia of adopting in the Longford case." In both cases, despite the efforts of the company, the facts eventually emerged.

Esso Australia was then prosecuted on 11 criminal charges of breaking health and safety laws. The case wound its weary way to the Australian high court, where a jury found the company guilty on all counts. On 30 July 2001 the Hon Justice Cummins issued fines of A$2m. The heavy fines, he said, were the result of the "litigious conduct of Esso in these proceedings" in particular the company's pathetic and eventually futile attempt to blame individual workers for the explosion.

The judge praised "the brave, decent and impressive men from Longford who gave evidence before me". He named in particular "Mr Jim Ward, the control room operator". He noted that lawyers for Esso Australia had originally blamed Mr Ward for the disaster, but when the operator appeared in court Esso's lawyers did not ask him a single question in cross-examination. The judge concluded: "Mr Ward and the employees did not fail. Esso failed."

Gladding Tidings

THAT old courtroom battler George Carman QC has secured a victory from beyond the grave.

Last week, after 14 years in jail protesting their innocence, Gary Mills and Tony Poole were cleared of the 1989 murder of drug dealer David Wiltshire.

Eye readers will recall that Wiltshire had been taken by ambulance bruised and bleeding from stab wounds after a fight and was twice discharged by doctors. He died on his third admission to hospital and Mills and Poole were charged with his murder.

One independent witness to the fight, Neville Juke, was the only one present not taking drugs. He was emphatic that a drunken Wiltshire had attacked Mills and Mills had acted in self-defence and that Poole had played no part at all. But Juke was never called to give that evidence and police gave an inaccurate account of his testimony to the jury.

Carman exposed this and other serious prosecution "improprieties" when Det Insp Trevor Gladding, one of the officers who led the murder inquiry, tried to sue Channel 4 over its *Trial and Error* programme about the case.

Although the appeal judges last week dismissed the assertion of Poole's QC, Edward Fitzgerald, that the police investigation was "rotten to the core", Lord Woolf, when he examined it as part of judicial review proceedings earlier this year, described it as a "chapter of errors" where "almost every aspect of the prosecution is tarnished".

FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS...

■ **ARMS DEALING:** More on John Bredenkamp, the arms dealer and sanctions-buster who wrote so portentously to the *Eye* recently complaining about our coverage of the UN commission on exploitation of natural resources in the Congo.

It seems Mr Bredenkamp is so sick of criticism he plans to quit Britain altogether. His wonderful mansion overlooking the golf course at Sunningdale, Berks, (six reception rooms, five bedrooms, a gym and a billiard room, etc) is on the market for £7.8m.

Meanwhile his mansion on Florida's Jupiter island is not much use to him since the US state department has frozen his assets there. But he does have alternative luxury homes in Spain, Switzerland, Brazil and Zimbabwe where he is seeking to improve relations with the opposition.

Though he often denies it, Mr Bredenkamp's fortune has come mainly from arms broking through his companies Casalee and Defco. Mr Bredenkamp's boldness in writing to *Private Eye* is not a regular feature of his relations with investigative reporters. In 1979, when BBC reporter Robin Denselow tried to interview him about sanctions-busting in the then Rhodesia, Mr Bredenkamp gave him the slip; and when, more than a decade later, David Baxter went to the Sunningdale mansion to ask Mr Bredenkamp about his arms deals during the Iran-Iraq war, the multi-millionaire ran away via a back door while the crew was filming the house.

■ CAFCASS: Tony Blair's constitutional shake-up has done nothing to help the most vulnerable children in Britain who rely on Cafcass, the disastrous children and family court service that was the responsibility of the now redundant lord chancellor, Derry Irvine (see *Eyes passim ad nauseam*).

Cafcass is supposed to protect children in care and those at the centre of acrimonious divorces. But as the *Eye* has repeatedly reported, it has been so poorly organised since launch that children now have a worse deal than they did under the old care and protection court systems.

Responsibility for Cafcass has now shifted to a new authority – the Ministry of Children and its supremo, Margaret Hodge, who has not served vulnerable children well in the past.

As the former leader of Islington council, she not only denied that children in her council's care were being sexually abused but sought to discredit those who presented evidence to suggest that they were. Three years after Hodge left Islington, a government report found that paedophiles had thrived in council-run homes.

Will she do better with Cafcass? A recent case shows how vital the service can be to helpless youngsters.

Two children in the home counties who were considered at risk were not allocated a guardian to represent them for more than two months. At an initial court hearing, when they had no independent voice, it was agreed that their father would take them in. But, unable to cope and without the knowledge of the local authority or the court, he returned the pair to their mother, about whom there was grave concern.

They are now the subject of an application for an interim care order. In other parts of the country like Wales children are still waiting 12 or 13 weeks to be allocated a worker.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

THE fall-out from the row between Jersey and Qatar over the £100m in "commissions" paid into accounts at a local trust company for the benefit of the Gulf state's powerful foreign minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber al Thani continues to impact on Standard Chartered.

Sheikh Hamad – as predicted in *Eye* 1077 – has exacted revenge for the embarrassment caused to him by the Standard Chartered trust company reporting the payments from British, French and Italian arms companies to the Jersey authorities. The sheikh paid £6m to reimburse the costs of the Jersey inquiry and legal proceedings in return for the investigation into the payments being dropped after intense lobbying by Qatar with its friends in Whitehall and Washington.

In its enthusiasm to be a good corporate citizen and report the suspicious transactions that looked very much like bribes, Standard Chartered overlooked that not only was Sheikh Hamad its customer, he was also its partner – in Grindlays Qatar Bank.

Not any more. On 2 June customers of that bank were informed that Standard Chartered had sold its 40 percent stake to "existing local shareholders", aka Sheikh Hamad. "All shareholders have reached the conclusion that the original joint venture… is no longer in their long term strategic interests," they were told. Hamad's original partner had been ANZ before it sold to Standard Chartered.

No price was mentioned but there has been speculation that Standard Chartered had agreed to pay up to $20m and give an apology to the sheikh. So instead of Chartered being paid perhaps they handed over the 40 percent stake in the Qatar bank. After all it was unlikely to receive much business having blown such an embarrassing whistle on the nice little earner of one of the anti-Saddam coalition's greatest supporters.

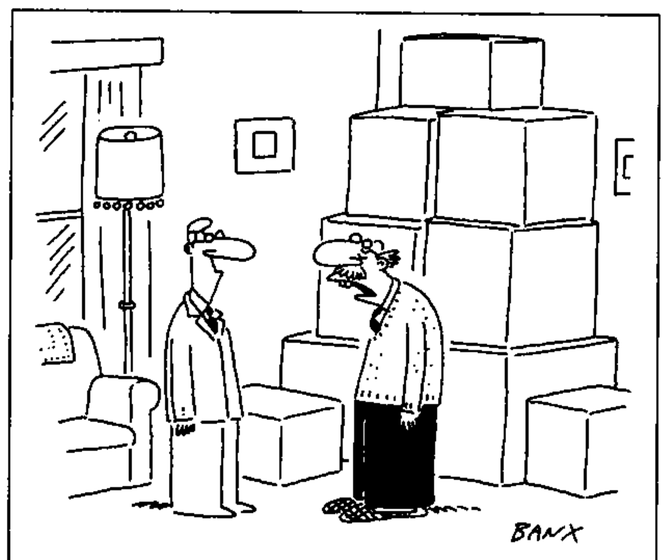
Meanwhile in Jersey the Financial Services Commission continues to investigate Standard Chartered and its trust company – and not just over the Qatar accounts. Local investigators indicate that the trust company has a number of problems stemming from its business in the Middle East and Africa.

THE £2.4m pension pot presented to sacked lord chancellor, paintings fancier and wallpaper expert Lord Irvine by a grateful nation for his six-year contribution to DIY is not the least of his retirement benefits. As a result of the Dear Leader, his former protégé, finally losing patience with his arrogance-inspired political gaffes, the egocentric "Derry" has one last chance to take the taxpayer for another expensive ride.

Plans announced by the treasury last year will in future cap all similar "fat cat" pension funds at a tax-free £1.4m. Above that tax will be paid at the 40 percent top rate on the excess amount in the fund. A potentially serious tax bill for those such as Lord Browne of BP and Sir Chris Gent of Vodafone whose estimated pension funds exceed £12m and £10m.

For Irvine this suggests a potential liability of over £400,000 to be paid either out of the fund, thereby reducing that desirable £100,000 a year pension, or by receiving a demand from the taxman. But thanks to Blair help is at hand.

The original intention was to bring in the pension cap with effect from April 2004. But this has now been pushed back to 2005. And as the new rules do not affect those who retire and start to take their pension before that date, the now ex-lord chancellor is well placed to avoid the cap by taking his pension either now that he has been forcibly retired from his woolsack or by April 2005 – just two months before he reaches 65.



"They took my pension, but I stole all their paperclips"

Ironically the Dear Leader will not be so lucky. His expected £3m pension fund will face the full 40 percent tax cut as he is most unlikely to retire by 2005 and is only 50 so cannot take his pension early. But then as this is a non-contributory pension, only the taxpayer pays, the pain is minimised.

However, there is still the unresolved question of whether "Derry" should face a tax bill for the five years he has enjoyed the £1.5m in art work he "borrowed" from mainly Scottish galleries to decorate his official residence.

Tax experts maintain this was a benefit in kind provided to the former lord chancellor only as a result of his employment. Company executives provided with art work are taxed on that basis. That, they say, means a 40 percent annual tax bill of £120,000 on the estimated cost of 20 percent of the £1.5m market value. The lord chancellor has denied this was a taxable benefit despite the fact that he chose the paintings and other art work.

But if the 100 paintings, etc have now been removed from the official residence in the House of Lords and are not being enjoyed by Irvine's successor, Lord Falconer, what greater evidence is there that this was indeed a benefit enjoyed by the self-important "Derry" only as a result of his employment and therefore taxable? However, whether the taxman will take up that challenge is another matter.

Meanwhile tax experts predict that the new pension cap will ensure that there will be a growing popularity for retirement by "fat cat" pension fund owners before April 2005 in order to ensure they obtain their full pension with no 40 percent reduction.

ONE of Lord Irvine's greatest failures was the ever burgeoning legal aid bill – £1.5bn in 1997 and almost £2bn this year – despite promises to crack down on, er, "fat cat" lawyers.

Criminal legal aid takes the biggest slice – £1.1bn. And of that, 1 percent of cases, mostly complex fraud trials with the Serious Farce Office in the opposite corner also funded by the taxpayer, are estimated to claim 40 percent of the cost.

With little fanfare the rules have been changed under Labour effectively abandoning means-testing of defendants thereby enabling anyone to qualify for legal aid. This was done because the limited recovery after conviction from those with assets was considered not worth the effort. Any funds had to be shared with victims and creditors.

However, it was not envisaged that the rich would then apply for legal aid on the basis that they could because there was no means test. But that is what is happening – a development that is considered by defence lawyers to now be powering the rise in criminal legal aid which is expected to grow from £982m last year to £1.17bn next year.

THE state visit of Russian president Vladimir Putin is likely to see questions raised about the outcome of the impending extradition proceedings against former oligarch Boris Berezovsky on fraud charges. These are due to start in September.

The home office thought long and hard about the Russian request and only agreed to go ahead after approval was given at ministerial level – an unusual move which indicates awareness of the political sensitivity of the case.

Britain does not want to alienate Putin, especially after the Iraq row, but is well aware that the evidence provided by the Russians may be less than convincing and the Russian legal system is not exactly renowned for its impartiality not to mention the continuing contract killings.

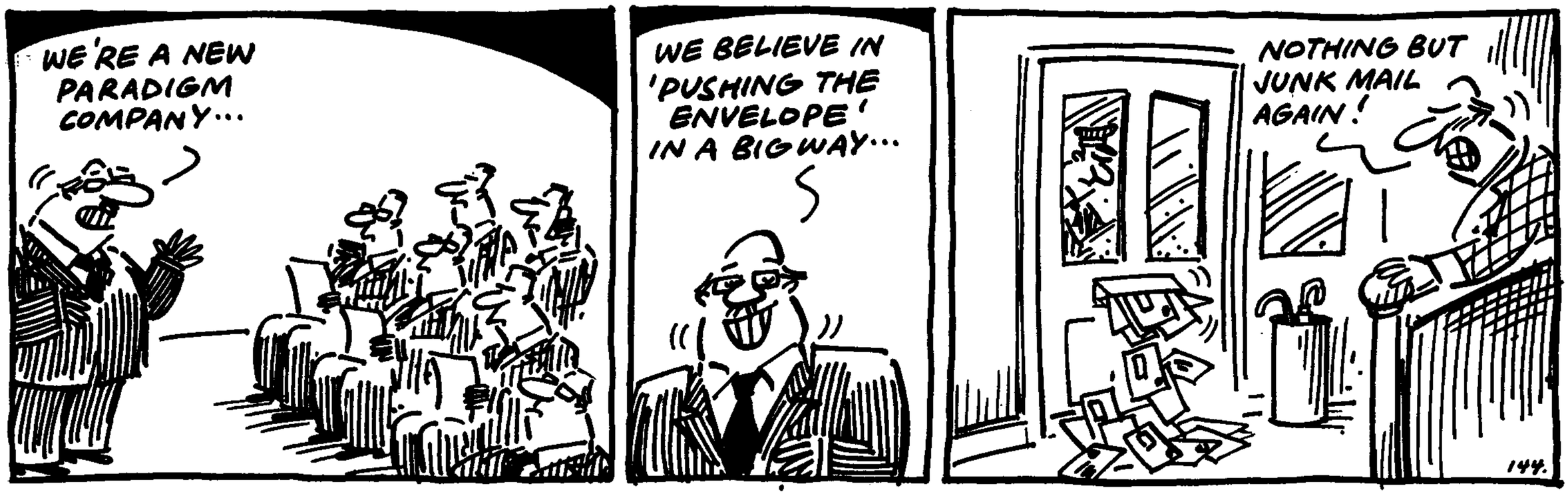
On previous occasions when Russia has talked of seeking to extradite Berezovsky the British authorities encouraged him to stay away. But after he arrived with more than £1bn and claimed asylum while continuing publicly to attack Putin, the home office was put on the spot. Britain wants Putin as an ally in post-war Iraq. Putin wants Berezovsky silenced and back in the former USSR.

A test for whether both sides can get what they want may be seen in the outcome of the current case to extradite a senior Chechen figure Akhmed Zakayev back to Russia on terrorism charges. Legal sources suggest that the Russians are likely to be disappointed here because of the "fair trial" problem.

The same could also happen with Berezovsky although there it is also felt that the evidence of the alleged £8m fraud may be less than

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG

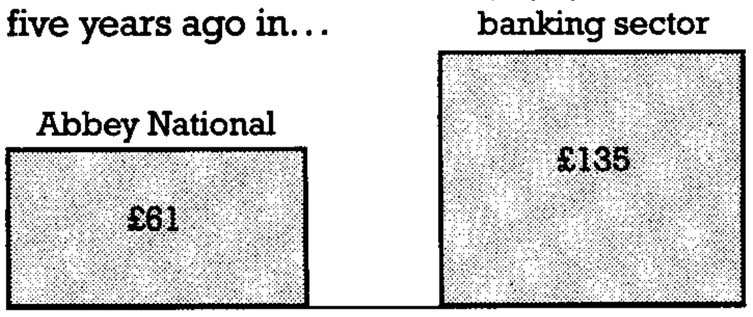


Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

Bad Habit

Value of £100 invested five years ago in...



convincing. But in both cases if the magistrates decide in favour of extradition, there are certain to be lengthy appeals – especially by Berezovsky who has unlimited funds.

The tough question for home secretary David Blunkett and Tony Blair will be whether to agree to extradition in either case if the courts rule it is possible. Not to do so in either case would enrage Putin. But asylum for an accused terrorist or a Putin critic would go down even worse in Moscow. If the courts rule Zakayev and Berezovsky cannot be extradited, it is expected they will be encouraged to find a safe haven somewhere else.

RUSSIANS are all the rage these days, not just with politicians but also in the charity world. Philanthropy is a well known route to respectability.

So it is no surprise to hear that Russia's biggest oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky of Yukos is being pursued by those infatuated by his cheque book and his wish to do good.

One of those said to be assisting the Yukos boss in meeting the right people on the London charity circuit is none other than Lord Jacob Rothschild whose reputation for generosity can only benefit from association with the new Moscow gold.

THE SFO investigation of the collapse at Independent Insurance grinds on. It is now in its second year. A decision on any prosecution is possible towards the end of this year. Investigators have uncovered clear evidence of fraud, particularly in the alteration of crucial documents and the misleading of auditors and actuaries.

However, the case is proving very complex and could be testing for a jury involving the niceties of reinsurance. Proving just who authorised and altered the various key documents is also another problem.

Chief executive Michael Bright and possibly two key associates are still very much in the frame; but whether they will stay there remains to be seen. Bright is likely to base his defence on reliance on expert advice while his underlings will argue he was a dominant figure who did not like bad news and expected to have his orders followed unquestioningly.

IT IS seemingly not only Harrods executives who find the phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed too much to bear.

His nephew Mohamed Salah el din Fayed, the Italian national son of his brother Salah, has ended a brief involvement with Fulham. The younger Mohamed joined all the relevant Fulham companies in March last year. But by September he was gone.

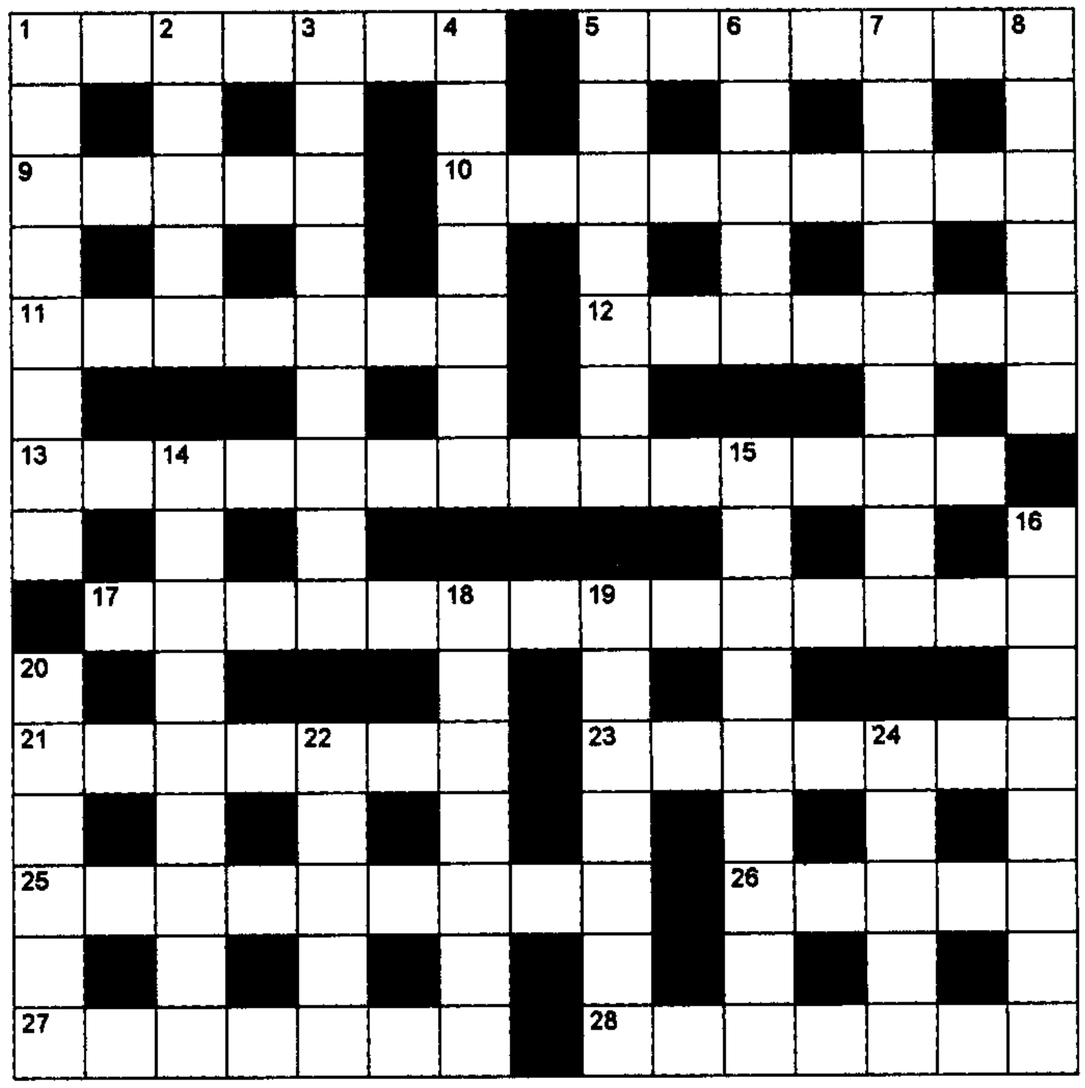
'Slicker'

SPECIALIST FRAUD PANEL FIRM based in West End require experienced paralegals to assist in the preparation of several major frauds.

Law Society Gazette

EYE CROSSWORD 238

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 4 July 2003.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

1 General in drag (RIP, Patton!) (7)
5 Craft needed to accommodate last bit of dildo in flamboyant style (7)
9 "Plain Clothes Fanny's endlessly at it – over" (5)
10 The people kicking out leader of 'Liberators' shock for Bush (5,4)
11 Orange order: topical switch of political allegiance, briefly (7)
12 Nothing kind about a female (5,2)
13 Nice way of describing "Hear! Hear!" is just what you'd expect from Graham Norton (6,8)
17 Unsubtle comedian's material likely to get panned? (8,6)
21 Carpeted and bedded (7)
23 Sexual activity after very unusual supper? (7)
25 Her long orgasms getting popular knight swanning around (9)
26 Bloke rolled in to get leg over (5)
27 Reserve fashion house for porky types (7)
28 Put off when Brenda's out of Garters (7)

DOWN

1 They squeeze members, preventing that sinking sensation (8)
2 Looter (not live) more in evidence (5)
3 "Presley is ill" crap grated (9)
4 American timelessly legging it might describe a punished Middle Eastern thief (7)
5 Nappy contents not hot but watch out for mites (4-3)
6 Soldier's inspection reveals messed up type, reportedly on E (5)
7 Time to dismember Blair (not his bottom half) (7,2)
8 Might cut out the sound of 'darling', topless, mouthy TV presenter (6)
14 Shameless, a husband tumbled grabbing blonde's butt (9)
15 Tony, though not quite finished, sure in shit – still they have no substance (9)
16 Dickhead Prescott finally took command and blathered on (8)
18 Arrange to shag a retiring officer's skivvy (7)
19 A cheeky cover-up (of member, too) when Tony's vacillating about France (1-6)
20 State protection requires York's principal to enter a disorderly house (6)
22 Stupid bastards getting in northern bogs (5)
24 Upturned trap that's under trolley (5)

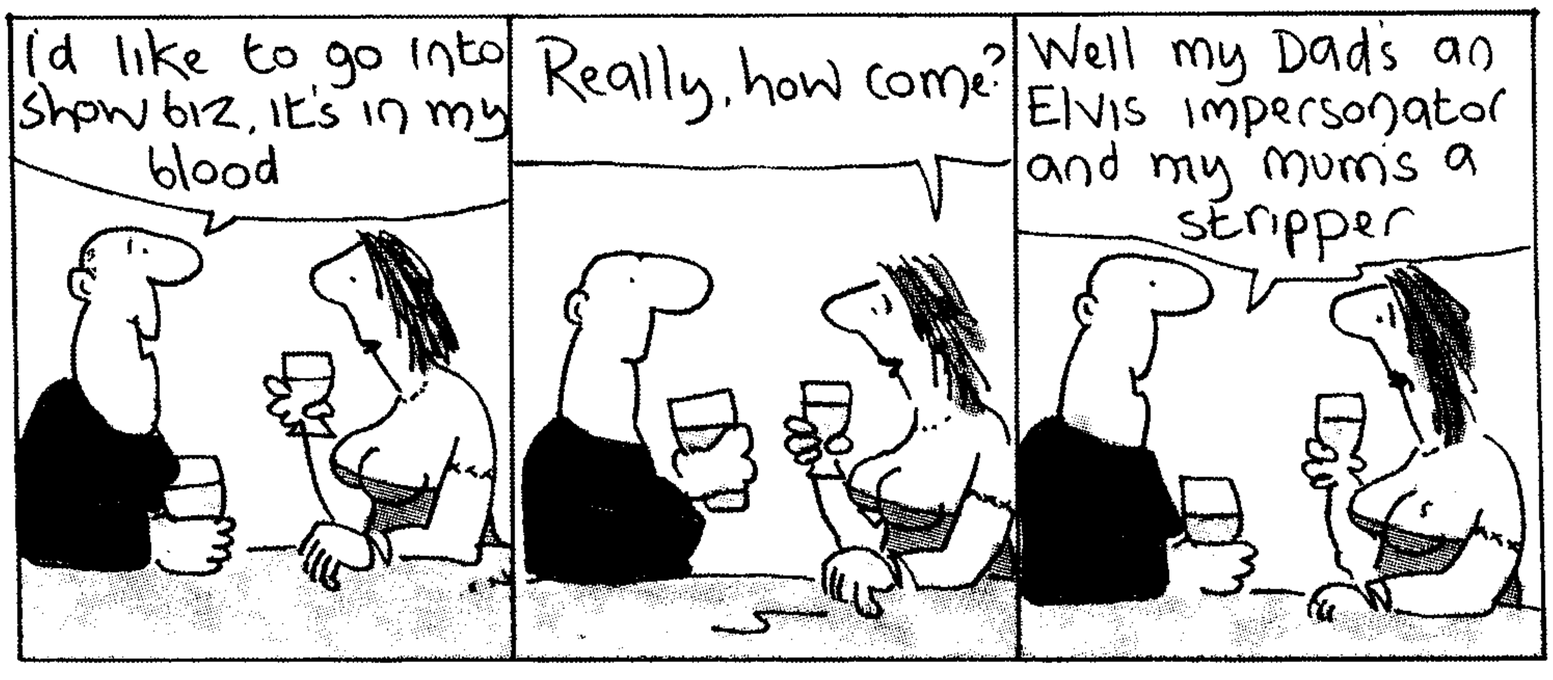
Crossword 237 winner: NICHOLAS J. CROWE

ACROSS: 1 Flogged 5 Bumbler 9 Expat 10 Vice Squad 11/6 Weapons of Mass Destruction 12 Dodgy 13 Rosary 14 Airstrip 17 Deflower 19 Ordain 22 Block 23 Turncocks 24 Warmonger 25 Inurn 26 Estefan 27 Tonally.

DOWN: 1 Free World 2 Orphans 3 Get your rocks off 4 Divest 5 Backflip 7 Launder 8 Ruddy 15 Penis envy 16 Pentagon 18 Footrot 20 Accrual 21 Dry rot 22 Bowie.

YOBS

HUSBAND



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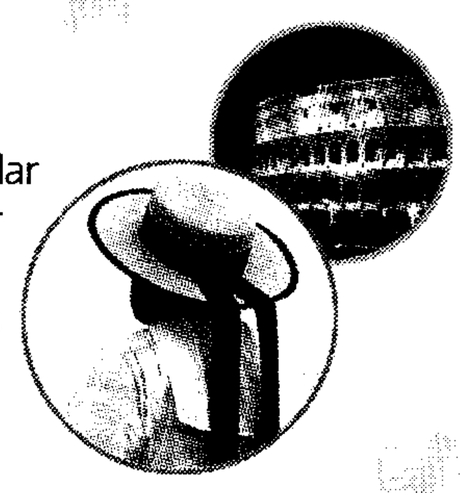

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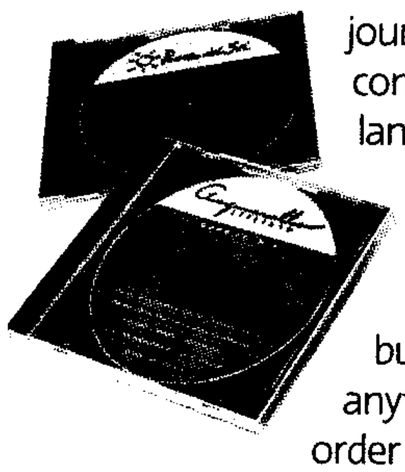

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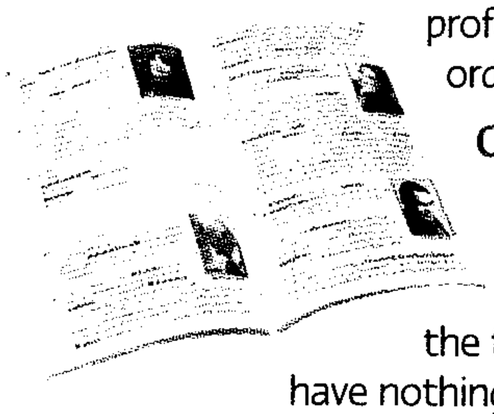

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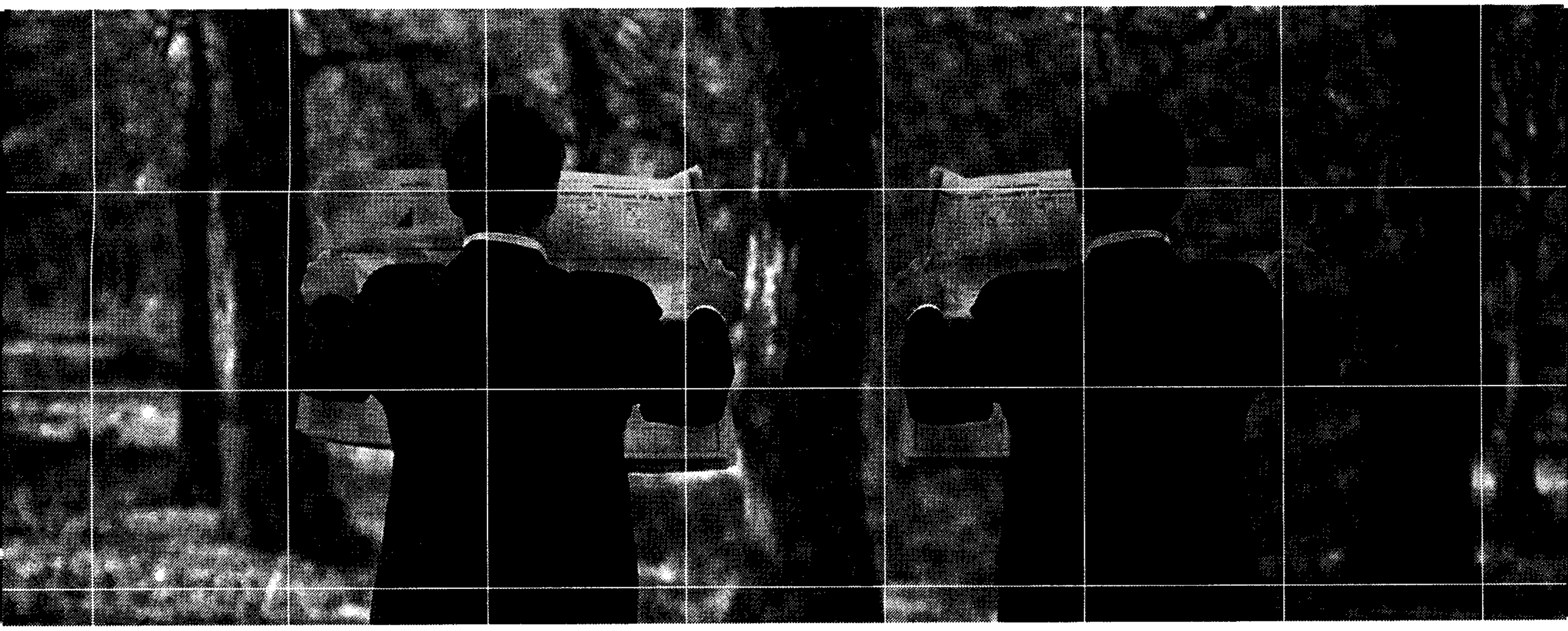

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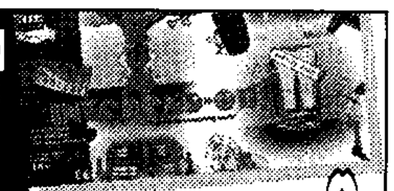

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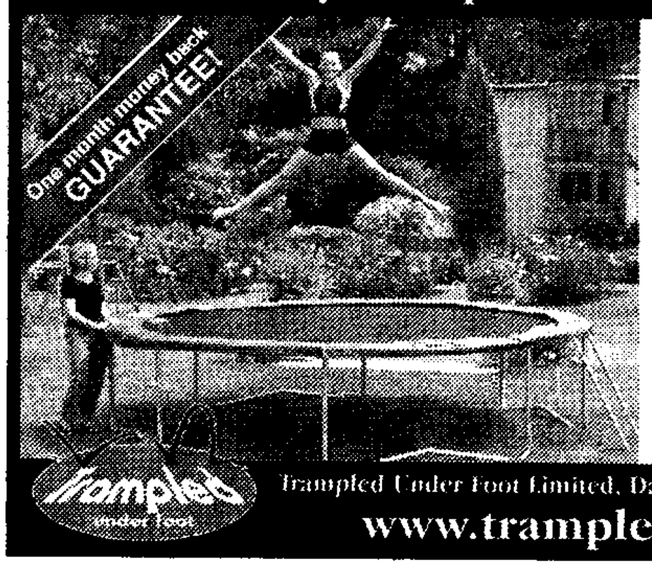

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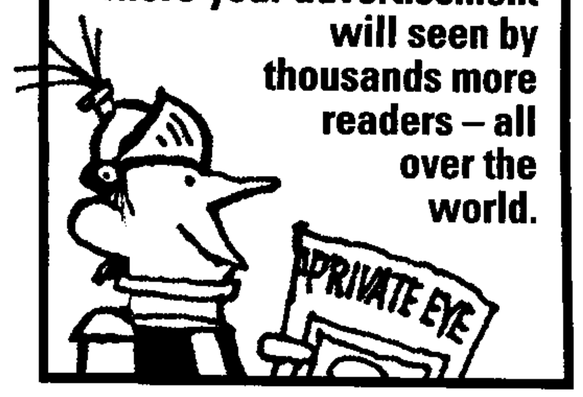

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EYE NEED

SINGLE MOM struggling needs financial help. Disabled daughter 11-03-58, 00253527 Halifax.

CHEEKY BIKER girl ready for an upgrade. Can you help? Lloyds/TSB 30-94-24, A/C 00239405.

ALRIGHT, 10K. 1 question, nothing personal. Please call 0208 758 8599.

RELIGIOUS CONTEMPLATIVE seeks patron / sponsors. Any amount appreciated. First Direct 40-47-75 40102466 Details: John_lumiere@care4free.net – God Bless You.

ANY DONATIONS?... Gratefully accepted! Please pay to: Lloyds Sc: 309725, Acc: 01321285 / HSBC Sc: 40-40-01, Acc: 61723782 / Barclays Sc: 207409, 40249300. I thank you all kindly.

TALENTED, ASPIRING exotic actress needs £4k for breast augmentation. Thank you. Halifax 11-04-72 00368151.

ANY SPARE MONEY and/or unwanted cash disposed of. 72-60-06 / 08411388.

HEAVY DRINKER REQUIRES 40 grand to pay off mortgage HBOS 80-11-94 00300288.

HARD WORKING LADY (38), small business, (single), NO MAINTENANCE, 5 v. bright beautiful, adoring children, seeks urgent sponsorship for youngest child's education. Please e-mail for further details: alicealida@hotmail.com

DESPERATE CARER: cannot work as partner terminally ill. All savings gone, losing home. Breaking point. Please help. Thank you. L-TSB 87-34-12 06019886

SCOTTISH SHEPHERDESS risks losing croft if cottage roof not repaired before winter. Please help. Wrong account deails last issue! 07-01-16, 23192127.

LONG-ESTABLISHED BALLET SCHOOL seeks donations to purchase permanent premises to further childrens' performing arts. RBS 16-00-28 Account: 00130177. Thankyou!

ABANDONED with 4 young ones, desperately needs £3000 to relocate. Yorkshire 05-07-12, 39523505.

DESPERATELY SEEKING FUNDS for reunion with love of my life currently stranded in Antipodes. Need at least £2K to prove worthy of Oz visa. Contributions gratefully accepted. NatWest ac 56240376 sc 60-30-22

FIFTH-YEAR MEDICAL STUDENT (17k debt) struggling to fund final year. Grateful for any support or advice. gratefulmedic@hotmail.com – 33212678, 60-10-07

DIVORCED, REDUNDANT, nervous breakdown. Need financial help to start again. Thank you. Account 00327638, sort code 40-47-79.

DESPERATE GRADUATE trying to avoid bankruptcy. Even a pound helps. BoS 12-22-30, 00404912

WOMAN STRUGGLING FINANCIALLY – ripped off by clever accountant please help. Royal Bank Scotland 16-60-50, 10372371. Thank you.

£6000 NEEDED for vital new life chance. Thank you. HSBC 41204904, code 40-35-23.

CHILDHOOD HEMIPLEGIA, hemiparesis, hemiplegic cerebral palsy. For information and advice visit www.hemihelp.org.uk

DROWNING IN £26,000 DEBT. Any help gratefully received. 08-93-00 26401133

EYE WANT

15TO1 – COME AND HAVE A GO – WE KNOW YOU'RE SMART ENOUGH! We need 1,000 contestants for our daily Channel Four quiz show. We are auditioning in your area soon for our Autumn series Ring us on 020 7691 6305 or E-mail us at fifteentoone@thamestv.co.uk for an application form.

EYE JOIN

END THE ROYAL FARCE! It's time to elect our next head of state – www.republic.org.uk – REPUBLIC (P) PO Box 34851, London W8 5YA.

LET THE PETER COOK Appreciation Society enter your wife ('Shurely "life"?' – Ed.) like a breath of hot air. Four ****ingly uncensored fagazines per year and a revoltingly Spiggotted badge will be yours for a mere £8, you toupéed tightwads. PCAS, 64 Pitchford Street, Stratford, London, E15 4RZ (or www.stabbers.org – if you must).

BLAIR PASHMINA PLOT to get Shorty – www.buggerbognor.org.

REGULAR ADULT PARTIES, daytime & Evenings, luxury central London locations, couples & singles welcome, call Gordon 07971298111 limelight_club@lycos.com

EYE LOVE

UNATTACHED WOMAN sought by warm, sensitive, articulate male, open marriage, retired, London – for enduring relationship. Enjoys arts conversation wining, dining. Box 1183.

PRETTY, WITTY, SLIM divorcee (43) needs witty man who's still capable. Brighton. Box 0283.

TALL, DEBONAIR HAMPSTEAD bloke, young 60, resident in Loire Valley, needs tall, elegant, flexible blokess to share jazz, blues, home cooking, Gallic charm + quality time travel in France, Spain, Africa & America. Background/photo please to Box 1083.

ATTRACTIVE, PROFESSIONAL, tall, medium-build, mature, real woman writer (family-free) seeking to meet successful men in Central London who are 6ft or taller, of a dominant nature, and good with their hands. Interests: Art, business, science, law, philosophy, literature and sexology. 07814 536933 (Voicemail only please).

LITERATE PROFESSIONAL, 40y, WLTM arty, slim, curvy woman, 25-35y. Ldn/Mids/Nth. Email: cah0831@yahoo.co.uk

TRAINEE LAWYER, F, 28, quiet but intelligent, fan of ER, WLTM unattached London-based doctor (I'm healthy!). E-mail: medicalattention required@hotmail.com

SLIM, SEXY, FUN FEMALE wanted for slim sexy fun guy. Married, 38 but stays in London in week and would love to share fun and frolics. E-mail dj8181@easy.com

CITY PROFESSIONAL 50 slim 6'2" non smoking based London west end interests artistic cinema and restaurants WLTM 30-55 years woman similar interests for friendship wining and dining. Box 1282

WILLING, ATTENTIVE, tall male, 50 seeks assertive female for enduring liaisons. Box 1883.

CHOCOLATE BROWN eyes & skin gentleman, 29, own London home, medium build, 6ft tall, easy-going, loves walking/cycling with countryside, WWLTM fun, mature, sensuous, vino-loving & intelligent woman. Box 1783.

PRAGMATIC, soft blonde woman, 50+ wants loving, appreciative man for life. NW London. Herts. Box 1383.

HELLO LADY! Feeling bored, neglected, unappreciated? Let's change all that. Once a month escape from work to spend the day with me in West Berkshire. No one need ever know. Me: 52yo expat. Visiting Britain monthly. Civilised, attractive, good company, generous, GSOH, VGIB (and modest, too!). Your age and status less important than broad-minded sense of fun and adventure. Discretion assured and expected. r69@supalife.com – Box 1683.

HORNY WOMEN 20-50 sought for daytime liaisons by handsome, sexy bloke, 30. South East. lunchtimedate@talk21.com

"SHALL I BE AN OLD MAN'S DARLING, or shall I be a young man's slave"? He who remembers song, resides London SE is invited to reply to: Box 1483.

MAN, VERY LATE 40S, medium cute, clever, fit, slim, professional, separated, seeks companionship, communication, fun and nonsense. Cambridge Essex etc. will_usually@yahoo.co.uk

GORGEOUS WILD CAT, 33, seeks male counterpart, must be 35-42, adventurous, down to earth and love climbing trees. Email: justforfun_67@hotmail.com

ATTRACTIVE WIDOW, 40, alone and struggling, seeks kind benefactor to make use of her attributes to mutual advantage. Box 2083.

SOD THE HEART! Erudite, enchanting enticing mind seeks a Companion for exchange of wit, wisdom and wickedness. 35+. Email choisie@hotmail.com

AFFABLE AND QUITE GOOD LOOKING MAN, 34. Quiet, contented life in the beautiful Northamptonshire countryside but no one to share it with. Box 0583.

FIT MAN 60, seeks younger fit lady for long walks, light lunches and leisurely evenings. S.E. Box 0883.

GENEROUS LONON BASED GUY seeks slim, attractive vivacious mistress (not the strict sort). Age preferred 20 to 30, for wining, dining and shopping if you have to!! Hopefully an arrangement to suit us both. I'm not too bad looking, 6ft slim, fit, well dressed, modest! etc etc – mc30@totalise.co.uk or Box 0983.

BEAUTIFUL ELEGANT LADY mid 30s seeks affluent, caring gentleman to spoil, pamper and adore her. North West area or can travel. Box 2183.

SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN, 51, attached, slim, tall, not unattractive, urbane, deep thinking yet fun loving, generous, passionate – seeks broad-minded, shapely lady for a discreet and unique arrangement. Photo please. Box 0783.

WITTY, GOOD NATURED MALE, 41, seeks slim, very attractive oriental lady 20-28 who is intelligent, loving caring and supportive for deeply moving relationship. Photo please. Scotland or must be willing to relocate. Box 2783.

NO NO NO NO NO. But I will let you. Male seeks female. 07956 997325.

FANCIABLE FEMALE, 36, black with favourable attributes easy on the eye, love of dogs, travel, motorbikes and the countryside with affectionate disposition, seeks lifetime partner (marriage) who is very tall (6ft and over) well balanced with no previous marriages or children. 30-45, who is spontaneous, unconventional, generous in personality with an implausible combination of wit, intellect and charm, to share funny and profound moments. No ginger or bald men – marieharteha@hotmail.com

NEWLY SINGLE, kind, intelligent, country loving man, 51, seeks warm, feminine, slim woman for walks shared interests, good food and more. Wilts/Hants – ttortoise25@hotmail.com

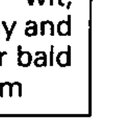
VANESSA sophisticated buxom beauty seeks handsome affluent entertainer to entertain. Photo a MUST. Box 0483.

DASHING BLADE 30 seeks bored attached goddess for naughtiness. Box 0383.

HANDSOME, PROFESSIONAL male 41, attached but bored, seeks passionate intelligent female for mutual stimulation London/South east. heatseeker@easy.com

DISCOVERED SEX AT SIXTY? Young journalist seeks older woman to explore her sexual revolution.david1975_2003@yahoo.co.uk

BLONDE, SLIM, STYLISH and fun lady, 56, London – seeks relathioship with affluent, generous, worldly man under 75. Box 0183.



EYE SEEK

MA (HONS) GRADUATE seeks publisher interested in hitherto untranslated French history books: academics assure their need to be translated into English. I can do it. Lacharp50@aol.com

HOMESICK EXPAT IN HOLLAND would like to um... actually, just chat to someome English. E-mail:jannekedw@hotmail.com

WILY OLD DEVIL still misses comely wench. Regrets harm done, pain caused. Would appreciate a call.

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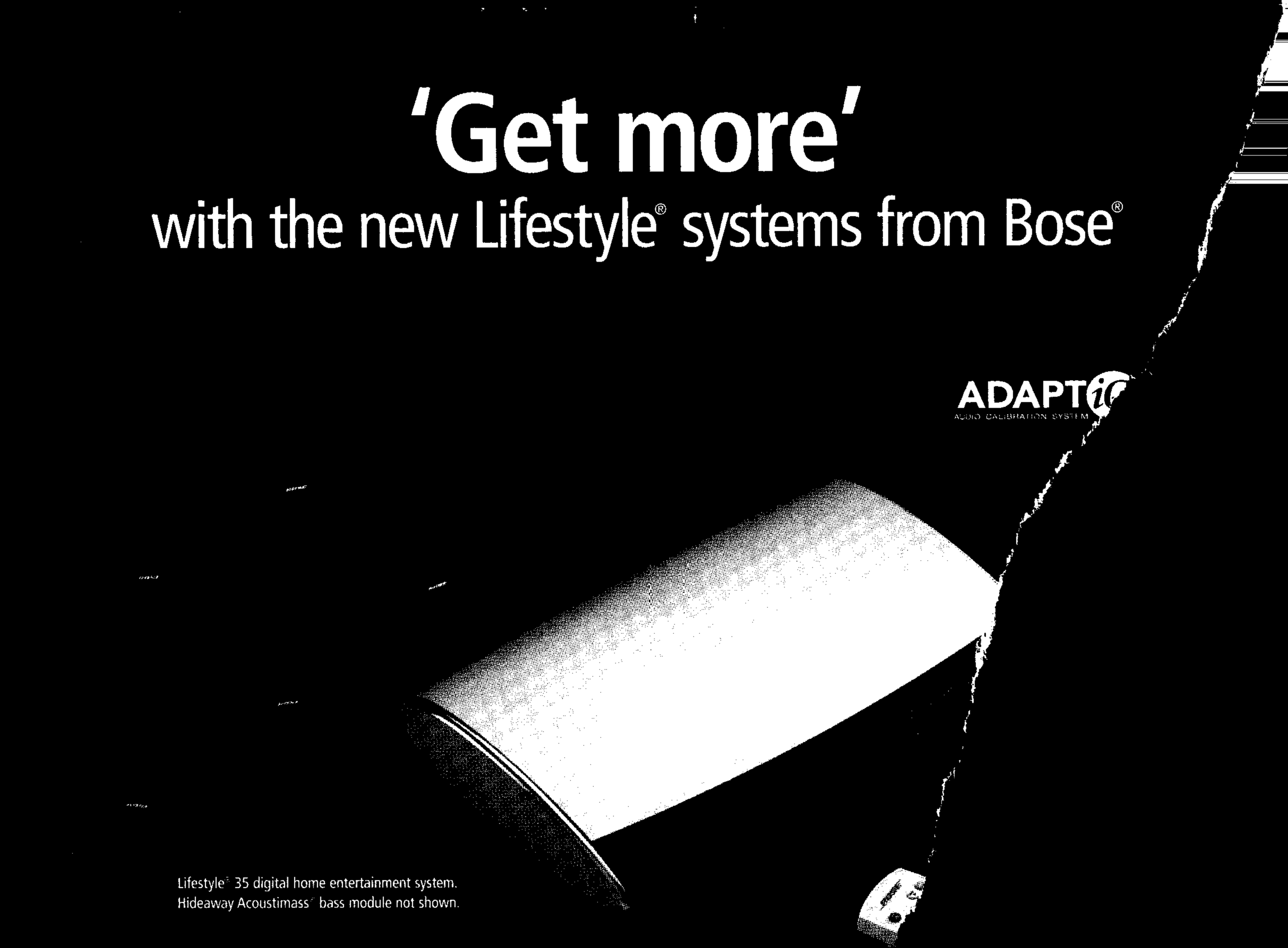

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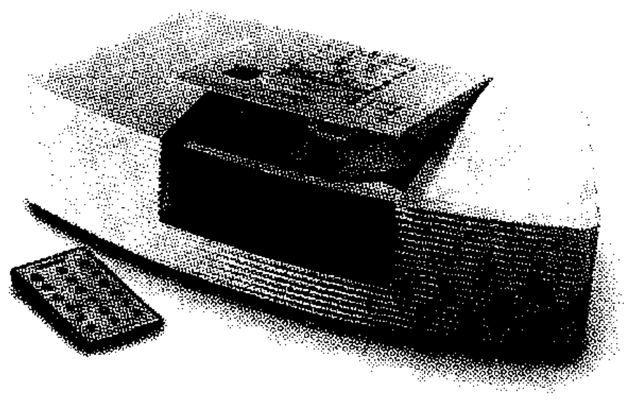

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